

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Love★You Light Novel

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VOLUME 1

Episode 1, Part 1

Episode 1: Rosalie Appears

She appeared from within a television.

It was small, a mere 25 inches.

And yet, from within she appeared.

That television sitting innocently in Kanda Shun's room was now a portal.

Proof? She practically stepped out of the game screen and into reality.

“ ... ”

Silence prevailed.

Sitting cross-legged on the carpet, Shun stared, stunned.

The television screen, bright with pixelated movements just seconds ago, had now turned into a pool of silvery white.

Slowly, gradually, her head, her neck, then her shoulders started to appear, causing the white surface to ripple gently around her.

“ ... ”

Reacting unconsciously, Shun shuffled backwards in panic, his feet colliding with a package on the floor.

Falling forward, the title read “Dragon Bless III, An Eternal Princess Heroine”

—

Dragon Bless III was the newest, hottest RPG game in Japan. Distributions started just slightly over a month ago.

The illustration on the cover depicted a female avatar. Often described as pure and elegant, the princess cum heroine of the game, Rosalie, knew no better joy than to extend a helping hand to the weak, and the innocent, the lost, and those in need.

With her cloud of golden hair, traveler's mantle draped upon delicate shoulders, and the Lia Fail stone of destiny shining with a fiery intensity in the hollow of her slender throat, Rosalie was the very picture of beauty.

And well, when the splitting image of that appeared from the milky depths of the television, it was no wonder Shun was stunned.

As the faux Rosalie was projected from the television, she floated above Shun, her hair and mantle waving about gently.

A stray thought crossed Shun's mind. This must be a dream.

Her eyes were shut, hinting at the deep pools of blue residing within, her angelic features were a childlike innocence.

She was, for lack of a better word, exquisite.

And now, that exquisite arrangement of features was floating mere inches above his head, casting a slight shadow upon his upturned face. Their faces were close. So close, in fact, that their breaths were released in mingling puffs of air. If Shun were to just stretch upwards by a little bit, a very little bit, he'd be close enough to kiss her.

Oh my God.

Shun's heart was near bursting. Just a millisecond more and...

His brain was totally blanking out. He had no idea what was going on. Why the hell was all this even happening anyways?

Why him?

Just then, he remembered something.

A few minutes ago...

While bashing his controller, a thought crossed Shun's mind: Oh man, I really wish Rosalie were real!

Yeah right, as if such things could ever happen.

But then again, it seems to be happening right now...

Just as the gears in Shun's brain were starting to whirl out of control, the girl's tiny little toes were projected out off, and finally left, the television screen.

And, as it often happens when gravity decides to assert itself, she fell down.

Hard.

"Ah?!"

—

It was a full frontal body attack, from midair! Unable to withstand the force of the fall, Shun tumbled backwards.

"Thunk!"



Shun's head collided with the side of the bed. He fell, sprawling on the carpet.

Languishing in his pain, Shun's nose had picked up the telltale scent of iron from blood, and there was that warm, soft weight on his chest, pressing against him just so...

Wait... What?!

Her sloping shoulders, the sway of her back down to her hips, delicate though they may be, were strong and resolute, her flowing golden hair smelled of wildflowers, and further down, Shun's legs were entangled with the material of her mantle.

It was impossible. And yet, she felt so real.

Shun's head threatened to burst. What in the world was happening?

And then, the world halted on her axis.

She was kissing him.

—

That's right. She was kissing him.

Her soft, pink lips were pressed against his cheek, mere inches away from his mouth. That rosebud mouth of hers felt moist, her breathe warm and sweet. It was heaven on earth.

To any other man but Shun, that was.

To Shun, this was an attack. A horrible, cruel attack of the highest order.

Through the entirety of his sixteen years of life, the total accumulation of Shun's dating experience had been zero.

And suddenly, this happened.

Stunned, Shun's right hand twitched and knocked against the television controller, causing the television screen to blank out.

The tensed silence that followed was so thick, it could be cut with a knife. This agonizing period seemed to stretch on further and further, as the silence filled all corners of the room.

"....."

An eternity could have passed, and Shun wouldn't have noticed. And for the first time since the beginning of this fiasco, a passing notion hatched in his brain – This could possibly, just possibly, not be a dream.

He had to get out of this situation, fast.

As his eyes slid to the right, he found most of his vision clouded by the thick golden blonde hair on the girl's head.

Well, no time like the present.

Employing all of his amazing reflexes, Shun whipped his head out from beneath the warm, soft pressure of the girl's lips...

Right, he needed a distraction. He stared at the girl's face instead.

Her eyes were still closed, her pretty features unruffled, almost as if his sudden movements had had no effect on her

whatsoever.

...

No way... No, she couldn't be...

Impossible, illogical, inane thoughts started to pop up all over Shun's head.

After all this time, he was still trying to find a loophole. His common sense dictated he do so, even after witnessing an event that seemed to defy every rule of common sense out there.

—

“....Hnnn!”

A gasp escaped the girl's lips, the first sound she made since her projection from within the television.

Her eyes fluttered open. They looked exactly like that of the game cover illustration, if not better, their blue depths reflecting such sincerity and beauty, putting even the turquoise waters of the Southern Islands to shame.

And now those same penetrating, blue eyes were staring right at Shun.

Faced with such intense focus, the only thing that came to Shun's mind was —

“AAAAHHHHH!!!”

—

Reflexively, Shun jumped up, and with surprising speed, managed to back himself, butt first, against the wall of his room.

The girl stood up, her mantle falling below her knees, a pendant swaying gently around her neck.

Hell, she really looked like the heroine Rosalie!

Absorbing her surroundings, and Shun, with curious eyes, it didn't take a genius to guess that she was confused. Of course, waking up in an unknown place, with an unknown person, does tend to have that effect on people.

As her wandering eyes surveyed the cramped little room, they alighted on the only chest of drawers there before they stopped dead.

A few seconds later the girl began to move, efficiently and purposely, towards the chest of drawers.

In an unknown place, with an unknown person, the first thing this girl did was not to talk to and question Shun, but to seriously and placidly check through his entire drawer, plunging her hand into it, while messing up his clothes completely, seemingly without caring that the owner of the room was standing just next to her, staring.

—

Shun had to give in.

She was a heroine. The heroine. The Heroine Rosalie from Dragon Bless III.

After all, fumbling through drawer after drawer was one of the basics of being a hero. Any hero.

This was especially the case in those special quests whereby you had to find some special rare item. In such an

event, the hero would usually just barge into any old house, proceed to open all the drawers and break all the teapots and kettles, just to find that one item. Then, when the item was found, the hero would just casually pocket the item and it would show up in their item list as their belonging.

Such were the rules of the game.

—

Shun's brain had just shut down on him. There had to be something wrong with him. There was no way he could actually accept such a bizarre happening in real life... Could he?

Meanwhile, entirely unaware of the ongoing commotion in Shun's cranial centre and having completed her task of going through the drawers, the girl started walking right towards Shun.

Five accelerated heartbeats later, she was standing in front of him.

She sure walked fast.

Snapping out of his momentary stupor, Shun stared at her, confused.

Up close, her delicate features were so very sweet and beautiful. But as he observed her, burdened gallantry, that ought to have no place in a young girl's features, seemed to be deeply etched into the contours of her face.

The final effect? A strong and beautiful, yet heroic young princess.

And well, there was also that smidgen of displeasure on her face right then. Must be because she couldn't find anything in the drawers.

The evening sun filled the room with a warm, golden glow.

—

As the faint scent of the Japanese mountain rose permeated the room, the girl finally uttered her first complete sentence, addressed to Shun.

"I wish to talk to you."

Her silver, tinkling voice was exactly as Shun imagined it. The perfect voice, for the perfect girl.

"Where am I? And whereabouts is this town? Are we in *Gard? Or is this place located in *Eterna?"

Her tone was even and measured, despite having just asked the most crucial of questions. But to Shun, nothing made sense. Heck, she could have been talking at the speed of a snail and he wouldn't have been able to catch a word she said. His already addled brain refused to cooperate; her every word only served to confuse him more.

This girl... Was she really the one and only Princess Rosalie?

"..."

Shun remained silent, unable to form a coherent reply.

For a few moments, two pairs of eyes locked onto each other, silently sizing up the other. Then, as if having deciphered the hidden message behind his silence, the girl stood up. Side stepping Shun's frozen entity, she headed towards the door of the room.

The room wasn't all that big – a few steps would take her to the exit.

A few seconds and she would be gone. For good.

And so would his chance.

He had to stop her, confirm that question niggling in his heart.

His mind made up, Shun turned with a sudden whip of his head and shouted out, “Ro-Rosalie!”

The girl stopped dead in her tracks. Turning to face him, her eyebrows raised in surprise, she asked, “Why, how do you know my name?”

END OF EPISODE 1, PART 1

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

*Gard – A fictional name for Earth in Dragon Bless III.

Eterna – A fictional name for Heaven in Dragon Bless III.

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 2

Episode 2:

“Heh! Someone’s got a huge crush on Rosalie!”

Just the other day, his friend Uehara was teasing him about it.

“Shut up! I do not!”

—

‘Dragon Bless’ was one of the most popular game series in Japan.

That morning, when Shun got his hands on the third series in the game trilogy, he set eyes on Rosalie, the princess cum heroine of the game.

It was love at first sight.

Rosalie, who had inherited the will of a selfless hero from her father, was incredibly innocent, sincere and true. Through fire and blood would she fight, to save her people, to give them that ever-elusive happiness; With dragons and warlords would she battle, to make the world a better place.

To live in service of the people – that was the pinnacle of her pride and joy.

Her soul was of light and purity, so much so that it hurt to look. But look Shun must, and look Shun did.

“Did I manage to bring some happiness into your life?”

To anyone she had helped, she would ask that question, and when the other person grinned and nodded, she would reply with a smile on her face, “If so, then I’m happy too!”

Such was Rosalie’s motto.

When faced with such a kind and beautiful girl, it was no wonder that Shun was drawn to her.

—

In the game’s storyline, Rosalie had welcomed her impending fate as a hero and handled everything with elegance and optimism to spare.

However, having to bear the will of such a noble hero – such a noble, undeniably male hero, Rosalie had, inevitably, developed a complex about her gender and her body.

To know that her strength would never match that of her father’s was a cruel fate.

As such, upon assuming the mantle of a hero, Rosalie had done her utmost to fit the mould. She altered her appearance as much as she could, utilized a man's swordplay complete with manly poses and positions, all in order to overcome her handicapped gender.

Then came the day when the people had finally recognized her efforts. They called her the "Princess of Heroes" and they praised her to the heavens for her all her heroic deeds.

The gratitude that had overflowed that day had reached her heart and warmed it, ridding from it her inferiority complex for evermore. That day, she had looked to the skies and cried, calling out to her departed father for him to see what she had done and to be proud of her.

It was touching, yet it was magnificent.

Shun, watching from beyond the television screen, had cried too. Her adventure was his, and there was no way he would ever forget it.

—

She was graceful, dignified; beautiful in her innocence. In her, Shun had found perfection – a perfection named Rosalie, and he fell in love.

This was the first time ever that he had felt so strongly towards a game character.

In fact, his feelings were so strong, that when they were just about to enter into a fight with the final boss in the game, his heart bled in its sorrow. He would have done anything, run through blazing fire, start a never ending rebellion in her name, even buy over the entire game company, just to keep her.

But he couldn't.

All he could do was watch her through the television screen as she gained in power and strength, her levels increasing at a shocking rate, until, at long last, she hit the level cap at lvl. 99. Her other stats too had been nearly maxed out, standing close to 300 points respectively.

But, if he had to find a flaw with her, it'd be her 'wisdom' stat, which had stayed stock still at 40 points, refusing all efforts to increase it, despite the wisdom roots and potions that he had painstakingly fed her with.

Well, must be a bug then, he thought.

—

The level cap was a bother, but there really was nothing left to do now but to clear the game.

Dejectedly, Shun paused from his enthusiastic perusal of the controller, and stared at the space on the carpet beside him.

If only Rosalie were here, he found himself thinking.

If only she were here, he'd be able to talk to her, see her pretty, animated features, touch her soft skin...

The image that hit him was so real, he practically salivated.

For the first time in his life, Kanda Shun actually found himself using all his powers of thought to 'imagine' the ideal situation – Rosalie sitting there, laughing at his jokes, actually talking to him.

And then –

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Season 1, Episode 3

Episode 3:

“Why, how did you know my name?”

An innocuous question, tinted with her surprise and thorough shock.

Even in this bewildered moment her expressions could not have looked more natural.

As she slowly turned to face Shun, the truth finally sunk – this girl was the real deal. From her delicate facial features, down to her tiny little toes, she was all real.

This girl was Rosalie. The complete, unabridged version of Rosalie. In the flesh.

—

He really was an idiot wasn't he? How could he ever have thought of her as a fake, after witnessing that extraordinary feat of her being projected from the television?

It was getting rather hard to breathe now.

His fingers were shaking with the effort to keep up with the situation, and his head was pounding. With all the blood and adrenaline pumping through his veins, his limbs were starting to feel numb.

After all this time, Rosalie, the real Rosalie, was standing right in front of him.

And he had no idea what to do.

.....

History could teach him nothing. Nothing like this had ever happened before. His texts were just as useless, as they would never be able to tell him what in the world was one expected to do when the girl of your dreams pops up from within the television.

Finally, he settled for screwing his eyes shut and shaking his head in the hopes of clearing it of all the mist. Take a deep breath, Shun. Just think. Rosalie, here, in the flesh! Come on man, you really ought to be a little happier about that!

And while Shun did not appreciate being chided by the voice in his head, what it said made sense. Seeing as how the situation was completely in his favour, he should be ecstatic right about now.

And with that, he opened his eyes, fully intending to enjoy his time with the beautiful Rosalie; consequences and suspicions be damned!

This was a once in a lifetime chance!

His trap was wide open, he was ready to answer all her questions.

But, as his eyes got used to the dim surroundings, he realized something – Rosalie was gone!

—

“W-Where is she?!”

Frantically, Shun spun around the room, in search of her. She couldn’t have gone missing in the space of half a minute, could she?!

It was then that his gaze alighted on the open door.

And then, from below, came the sound of splintering glass.

Shit.

Rushing down the stairs, Shun found Rosalie crouched at the narrow hallway, hands searching amongst the splintered remains of a broken glass vase, obviously in hopes of finding an item.

Her fluid movements were so typically hero-like, that Shun was taken aback.

—

As Shun descended the bottom rung of the stairs, Rosalie stood up, a dissatisfied frown tugging on her mouth – her search had yielded no results. She looked passively at the drenched mess on the floor, courtesy of her handiwork, and with a swift toss of her blonde head, proceeded towards the bigger living room.

“Polar! Gando! Nite! Where are you guys?” she called for her trusted companions.

... ..

Silence.

Shun rushed down the stairs, past the hallway and came to a stop at the entrance to the living room, staring at Rosalie’s immobile back.

Time seemed to stand still; Nothing happened.

And then –

-Eat

-Don’t Eat

A textbox floated into sight.

—

“Eh...?”

The textbox that floated out of nowhere – it looked kind of familiar. It was almost as if it were the command window of the game-

No way.

Rosalie was standing stock still, staring at the box of cream puffs on the kitchen table. After breakfast, Shun had conveniently forgotten to put it back into the fridge.

Being the avid gamer that he was, it didn't take Shun all that long to decipher the relationship between the strange command box and Rosalie's actions.

Could it be that-

But, with no controller in sight, how in the world was he supposed to pick a choice?

The sweet scent of clotted cream was wafting towards them, and as Rosalie stared at the box melancholically, a notion was hatched in Shun's head – I really wish to let her eat it.

And the window disappeared.

Where in a game there would have been a beep, signalling that the player had made his choice, there was now only silence that racked the room.

Then, as if the control stick had suddenly been put into action, Rosalie walked towards the table and, using just the slightest bit of strength, opened the box of cream puffs. Picking up one, she held it to her nose for a sniff before biting into its creamy softness.

.....

Watching her, it was as if time had stopped.

Fine tremors ran across her body, and her large eyes slid shut in ecstasy, as she savoured the sweet, full, creamy taste of the custard that bloomed on her tongue. A sheen of sweat appeared on her forehead and her cheeks pinked in delight.

It was fate.

If this was a just a dream, Rosalie decided she would make the best of it. Plunging her fingers into the box of cream puffs, she grabbed one in each hand and proceeded to stuff her mouth, biting into each one alternatively.

A repetitive process of bite, chew, swallow; change hands, bite, chew and swallow. All that dignity and poise had taken a flight out of the window.

—

Watching her every enthusiastic bite, it occurred to Shun that this might be the first time that Rosalie had actually eaten.

After all, in Dragon Bless, also known as D.B. to their avid fans, there had never been an option to 'allow the character to eat'.

Hmm.... Come to think of it, he ought to bring up that point with the producers next time.

Anyways, what an amazing sight it was to watch the girl he had always idolized, even back when she had just been an image on his television screen, take her first bite of food, ever! In her entire life!

He stared fondly at her, noticing her cheeks bulging with the cream puffs and bits of cream that were smeared across her lips. Her features, frightening in their intensity during battle, had all but melted away into a puddle of happiness, cream puffs and rainbows. It was almost as if her time had been set on reverse, sending her back to when she was but a girl, chasing after the herd high up in the Alps.

Sigh. What a lovely sight.

However, while indulging in this rare treat, a slight worry was niggling insistently at the back of Shun's mind. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but somehow this wasn't how he had pictured the statuesque warrior princess. "Dragon Bless" had projected an image of her as a strong warrior and a dignified and noble princess, but watching the scene in front of him, the jarring difference between the two had become even more prominent.

If anything, it served to make the girl in front of him that much more real.

Because only those that were real could be flawed.

—

Within minutes of indulging, Rosalie found herself staring at an empty box.



A last lingering glance and she turned to faced Shun. Head on.

“Ah... Well, you s-see, there’s n-no more,” Shun stuttered, unnerved by her beauty and intensity.

Rosalie spared another longing glance at the box, steeled herself. “What was that?” she asked, completely unaware of the effect she had on the poor boy. Her fingers were pointing imperiously towards the box as she demanded her answer.

“E-erm...”

Tongue-tied, it took a few more seconds before Shun managed to sputter out the words, “cream puff,” in a strangled voice.

“Skim duffs, I see,” came the reply.

With a nod, Rosalie gave a sidelong glance at the empty box, her eyes glazed over with regret.

“Such strong foes.”

Clearly, she had no idea what they were.

—

“And pray tell me,” employing her insane reflexes she turned towards Shun, “who are you?”

If he had, for a moment, thought that she looked rather intimidating in her seriousness before, it was definitely nothing compared to how she was staring at him now.

Her stare sent chills down his spine.

“Just now, if only for a while, I felt as if something had passed between us. It was as though a spark, or a thin thread of fate was connecting us.”

No, it wasn’t possible. She couldn’t have felt him issue that command with his mind when the command window popped up.

Could it?

“What’s more, this is not the only time that I have felt something so strange. Time and again, throughout my life, such twinges would occur, and I would find myself doing a certain thing, regardless of whether I willed it or not. So, pray tell me, who, sir, are you?”

Oh yes, she could feel it.

—

Shun found himself caught in a very strange situation.

Here was the heroine of his favourite game, and his long-time cyber crush, Rosalie, in the living room of his own house, telling him that she had always been able to feel his presence through his commands, while simultaneously asking him for his name.

Real life, right then, was – ironically – unreal.

All that thinking, with all those ideas flooding his brain, was really starting to put a strain on him. His temples pounding, Shun was just about to give up and state his name when a very strange thought occurred to him.

“Please sir, if you would tell me your name?” With no reply forthcoming, Rosalie repeated her question.

“A-Ah, erm....”

At that unpropitious moment, his phone rang, signalling the arrival of a new mail.

—

In a split second, Rosalie tensed.

Too late Shun realized that he had just adopted that new message ringtone, a soundtrack from the “Song of Effective Curses” in the newest “D.B” version.

Shouting a quick warning, she tackled Shun, pinning him onto the ground. Then, clutching onto her pendant with her right hand, she stretched her other into a pool of blinding white light, pulling up her holy sword from within.

With a broad swing she unleashed a powerful wave of attack, destroying near all of the living room. The wallpaper was torn and she saw to it that the calendar would never be used again. The antique cupboard that stood at the corner had had its glass doors completely smashed through, and the room itself seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

It was almost as if a wild storm had set into the room.

In fact, with the bits of glass and wood all over the floor, the room’s condition was akin to that of an action movie set, albeit one wherein the shooting had already been completed.

“Damn it! Did he get away?”

Rosalie’s frustration, cute as it was, made Shun realize that, as the situation was now, he could never let anyone else find out about Rosalie’s identity, or else things would get more than a little sticky.

But then again, that was only if, hypothetically speaking, she did get found out.

And he really had other things, bigger things, to worry about now.

—

Why, oh why, of all places, did he have to end up here?

His mind was shocked and horrified and was chiding him to get away as soon as he possibly could; his very male anatomy on the other hand was very happy indeed, and wanted to stay there for the rest of his life.

After all, any hot-blooded male would have wanted their faces pressed right up against Rosalie’s breasts.

... ..

Oh my, they really were bigger than they seemed, weren’t they? That warmth, that softness, that bounce, they were unreal. The devil’s tempta- No, no, it had to be the angel’s gift to all men on earth.

This was bad.

He really had to get out of there, before Rosalie noticed, ahem, a certain, lower part of his anatomy, which had already —

Anyways, Shun struggled about, but Rosalie grip on him was firm. She had him clipped tightly to the valley of her voluminous breasts, and her strength was no joke. High school boys, especially the weaker ones like Shun, stood

no chance against her.

Suddenly, amidst the struggle, he heard a voice.

“Shun-chan, what’s going on here?”

—

Crap.

The front door opened. Miko-neesan had let herself in again.

His cousin must have heard the commotion from next door and had come running to find out what was going on.

Shit, he thought. *Not now!*

A few seconds later, the door to the living room creaked open and Miko-neesan had walk in.

Life was cruel.

“Shun-chan!”

Miko-neesan, also known to others as Kobato Mikoto, was a beautiful girl gifted with a slender physique and generous, full breasts. Her kind, motherly nature too, added to her appeal.

However, there really was no one in the world that Shun hated more right then.

From Mikoto’s point of view on the other hand, the world had been turned upside down. First, the living room, looking like a set ordered straight from hell, was in utter chaos. And then there was this weird girl in a fantasy cosplay outfit, and to top it off, her cousin had his face practically buried in the girl’s chest!

Scared out of her wits, Mikoto stood, dumbstruck, her eyes staring a distance away to avoid the uncomfortable scene in front of her.

“Shun-chan’s turned into a NEET!” she all but exclaimed, before keeling over, landing face first onto the floor. Another one of her fainting spells.

In her surprise, Rosalie loosened her grip, finally allowing Shun to escape her deadlock.

Evidently, Rosalie had been rattled by the scene, staring, stunned, at Mikoto’s prone form on the ground. His bewilderment was really starting to grow to astronomical proportions.

In an attempt to regain some semblance of normalcy, or at least calm his racing heart, Shun stuck his hand into his pocket and felt for his phone, determined to alter his ringtone.

After all, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

Then, figuring that he might as well do so, he clicked to view the message that he had received. It was a text from his friend.

The message read – **Did Rosalie disappear over in your place too?**

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 4

Episode 4:

Shun walked out of the living room and into the hallway for some privacy, his phone clutched to his ear.

“What is it, Uehara?”

“What do you mean by, ‘what is it’? Didn’t you play Dragon Bless today?”

Even over the receiver, Uehara’s voice seemed calm and unperturbed. It was only because Shun knew Uehara as well as he did that he managed to catch a rare hint of excitement in his friend’s voice. (In fact, he’d think that his friend was a physic, given the timing that mail of his)

“Err... Yeah, I’ve played today.”

“Then you know that Rosalie has disappeared?”

The words came tumbling out of his friend’s mouth. His eagerness was apparent.

“Like, there’s a huge uproar over this, just check the internet! People are saying it’s impossible! There is no way that every single game in the world has the same bug at the exact same time. And what’s more, Dragon Bless isn’t played online, so no main server to blame here.”

“A bug, huh?”

“If you were to play now, you’d know. It’s like, Rosalie’s suddenly disappeared and the screen is permanently frozen. Then, when you try to restart the game, the same thing happens. The saved data and everything, it’s gone too! I’ve not really played D.R. since clearing the final stage, but just now, I went to check and it’s just like everyone says. It’s horrible!”

“....”

Uehara’s description, sloppy as it was, resounded in Shun’s mind. It was more than likely that Shun was a witness to that incident, too.

He was watching her swing her sword on the screen, and for a split second, thought how amazing it would be if she really were here, when suddenly she disappeared and the television screen blanked out.

It was just as Uehara described it.

Except that in his case, she disappeared from his screen, only to appear right in front of him.

“All those online discussion forums, such as 2-channel and the like, are going crazy! A lot of people out there have this insane theory that this is part of a large scale terrorist operation that’ll hit Japan! Then, like, there have been

people saying that they've called the game producers to find out the cause of this, while others are speculating that another country has terrorist designs on Japan – ”

Uehara rattled on, with Shun barely ingesting half of what he said.

Wasn't his fault, anyway. Words like 'futaba' and 'beeper' were only meant to be understood by people like Uehara, who was neck-deep in otaku culture.

...

The world had turned completely upside-down.

Shun was on the verge of giving up. He seriously had no idea what to think of anymore.

Well, not that anyone could blame him. The so-called 'bug' that had quaked the internet was standing right in the middle of his living room.

Rosalie had really appeared in the real world, hadn't she?

“Hey, you still there Kanda?”

“Wha – Ah, sorry, Uehara.”

“Well, I guess in your case, it's the shock talking isn't it. Have you finally cleared that last level yet?”

“E-Err... No, not yet.”

A tap on his shoulder and a soft voice uttered his name.

“Shun.”

Frightened out of his wits, he nearly dropped his phone in shock. Rosalie was standing right behind him now.

“H-Hey, what was that – Wait, is that a girl's voice I hear?”

“Sorry, I'll call you back!”

Shun hung up, and cut the power, just in case.

And again, “Shun.”

“W-What?”

His stutter did nothing to hide the fact he was panicking inside. Her proximity didn't help either. If anything, it only made things worse, considering that a few moments ago he was flush against those generous mounds.

He felt his face redden.

Somehow though that stuttered acknowledgement was sufficient. Shun watched as Rosalie lifted her head, her face alight with awe, to gaze at him with something akin to respect.

And then –

“I, Rosalie, heroine and princess of my people, hereby promise myself to you as your bride!”

–

Had he not borne witness to the fact that Rosalie, the beautiful heroine, the princess and the only character worthy of notice in the game “Dragon Bless”, had proposed to him, Kanda Shun, on bended knee, he would never have believed it.

No, not even if his life depended on it.

—

You see, coincidence really was a bitch.

In order to defeat the true Demon Overlord in Dragon Bless’s in-game story plot, the character had to manoeuvre Rosalie into entering a marriage, albeit only in name, to the Dragon King Spirit. As the name suggested, the Dragon King Spirit was merely a spiritual presence, unable to take physical manifestation, and after the marriage ritual, Rosalie would gain a new power that was needed in order to win against the Demon Overlord.

And here’s where the coincidence comes into play. The name of the Dragon King Spirit just happened to be – Shun.

As there would be no going back after gaining the power – it was a straight road from there to the battle with the Demon Overlord. Shun had not yet played past that particular story flag in-game.

“I finally understand.” Rosalie’s voice interrupted his train of thought.

“This is a completely different world. None of those that I’ve mentioned before were correct.”

Shun shot her a hopeful look. Rosalie might have managed to figure out that this was the real world after all!

A small nod, and then, “This is the world of the Dragon King Spirit.”

...

Shun slapped a hand to his forehead.

Oh dear God. This was going to be a piece of work.

—

“W-Wait! You’re making a huge mistake!”

At this point, Shun was willing to try anything to get her to understand her situation.

“I’m not the Dragon King Spirit! Yes, you’re right, this is a completely different world, but it’s not the one you imagine it to be! I’ll explain everything to you in a minute, so if you’ll just stay calm and listen t – “

Great, she wasn’t even listening to him.

“Let us now exchange our vows!”

He really needed to explain it all to her soon, or else – Wait, what did she just say?

“Wait, what? Exchange vows?”

In a flash, Rosalie had stood up. Drawing herself up to full height, she closed in on Shun. With nowhere to run or hide, Shun found himself, once again, backed against a wall.

“Eek!” An unmanly squeak sounded from the back of his throat.

Rosalie pressed on.

“O Great one, please offer me your protection.”

Shun, never one to defy others, even on the best of days, found his resistance crumbling. Rosalie really was overwhelming. In fact, with her bending low in front of him, almost mounting him, he had already lost in the battle of wills.

He gulped.

Atop of him, Rosalie once again put forth her request, “I would like for you to marry me.”

Marry her? As in, like, the exchanging of vows an—

Suddenly, a window appeared in Shun’s direct line of sight.

-Marry her

-Do not marry her

—

Any more of this, and his heart would give way.

Rosalie seemed to be paused above him, suspended in time. She could blink and seemed to be capable of deliberate actions, but as the situation stood she would most likely be unable to move until Shun gave his command.

His palms were sweating and Shun cursed his virility. He was supposed to be looking at the command window, not Rosalie’s breasts behind it, damn it!

Her generous bosoms were heaving with each breathe, and her short skirt seemed to lead to miles of long, beautiful legs.

And now she was giving him a chance to marry all perfection found in a woman, and all these would be all his for the taking, and, and —

No, no, no, no!

How could he even think of Rosalie, the pure princess Rosalie, in such a lewd manner!

As raw desire and common sense battled for dominance, Shun felt sick enough to throw up.

...

At last, “No, I won’t marry her!”

—

“No, I won’t marry her!”

As before, the command window disappeared. Shun got up from underneath Rosalie as her capacities of movement returned to her.

Rosalie turned to face Shun.

“Why not?”

“What do you mean by ‘why not’?! How can you get married, let alone exchange vows with someone out of the blue like that?!”

Shun’s indignant retort was met with silence on her end. The young princess appeared to be contemplating his worries. Hopeful eyes stared at her before –

“I see. So we can get married, as long as it’s not out of the blue.”

...

Amidst the hopelessness of the situation, Shun had a sudden flashback. Her stats, her intelligence stats, were only around 40 points, at best.

Great.

“I know that before getting married, a male and a female would have to overcome various trials.”

Wait. W-What? Where was she taking this?

“Well, there was this time when I helped the prince and princess of two opposing countries, who were secretly in love with each other, in the process of their elopement, later acknowledged by all as their official marriage.”

She nodded, trying to convey her absolute confidence in her own knowledge.

“First comes the ‘exchange of letters’.”

Shun would have laughed if not for her solemn voice which brooked no contradictions.

“The first letter should go along the lines ‘I would like to express my deep reverence and affection for thee’. Then you should answer with something akin to ‘Me too, my love’. Next, we need to have a midnight rendezvous. We can meet secretly by a lake, (there is a lake nearby, isn’t there?) in the cover of the night. Then, we’ll hug each other passionately while I lament your birth right, saying phrases such as ‘Wherefore art thou Henry?’ Finally, we’ll elope. This is where we’ll run away from our respective castles and then pledge to stay with each other, forever. We’ll run to some tiny village where there will be a church and a pastor awaiting our arrival, and then we can get married.”

...

Shun was speechless. She had just completely dictated the flow of the in-game marriage event.

40 points max in intelligence.

The image of her stats chart flashed again in his mind.

Shun shook his head, but it seemed that Rosalie was not yet ready to stop.

“Therefore, O Great Shun,”

“Yes?”

“Let’s start with the exchange of letters.”

—

“Pen and papers.”

“Huh?”

Rosalie's sudden movements left Shun scratching his head in confusion.

"Pen and papers. I've written letters before. We need pen and papers to write a letter."

With firm, quick steps, Rosalie walked down the hallway, reaching for the nearest door.

Really, how hero-like of her – without even waiting for the owner's permission, she had already set out on her search for pens and papers.

"H-Hey, wait!"

Not wanting her to cause any more trouble, Shun ran after her.

Too late. Rosalie was already twisting the knob of a nearby door, and then she pushed it open.

"N-No wait, you don't understand, that's the – "

A gleam of white, and of all places, she found herself in the toilet.

—

Shun's parents had decided on a western style toilet, complete with a gleaming white toilet seat and cover, as well as bidet functions. Rosalie, whom Shun guessed to have never seen a toilet in her entire life, was staring avidly at it.

Just then, that annoying little command window appeared, again.

-Go to the toilet

-Do not go to the toilet

Wait a minute, there was even a choice for that?

In the recesses of his mind, Shun thought that maybe it would be a good thing for Rosalie to go to the toilet. It would be amusing. He'd never seen her do it before anyways.

His decision must have been telepathically transferred to that command window again.

It disappeared from his sight and the next moment Rosalie had already entered the toilet and lifted the toilet seat cover. Then, reaching under her skirt, without so much as a second's warning, she had already pulled down her panties.

"W-WAAHH!!"

Screaming like a girl, Shun banged the door shut. Breathing hard, Shun backed against the wall. The image of those dainty, white panties would forever be imprinted in his mind.

—

Moments later, a flush sounded and Rosalie appeared from within, droplets of water still glistening on her hands. The relieved smile that adorned her features was enough to melt even a heart of stone.

However, it was not to last. Soon, her face had regained its determined line and she strode purposefully to the living room.

Oh no. This was bad. Mikoto was still in there. What if –

Feeling the familiar panic setting in, Shun hurried to catch up to her.

“H-Hey, come on. Can’t this letter business wait for a bit?”

“Wait? Of course it can’t.”

Rosalie’s voice now held a small note of reproach, as if chiding him for being such an irresponsible person.

She entered the living room.

The same sorry state greeted them, just like it did when they moved to the hallway just now. The smashed vase, the ripped wallpaper, and of course, Mikoto, passed out on the floor.

Thank god for that. Now, he just needed to get Rosalie out of there as soon as possible.

“Qu hail!”

Oh, she really did have a beautiful voice. Shun wanted to sink into it forever and –

Oh no. Was that the song of awakening she just sang?

Grabbing Rosalie by the shoulders, Shun was sweating with desperation as he asked, “Why the hell did you do that for?!”

Judging from her surprised look, Rosalie clearly had no idea what she had just done.

“W-Why are you angry?”

But already, it was too late. Mikoto’s body started glowing eerily. Her breathes were coming in long, even pants.

And then – her eyes opened.

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 5

Episode 5:

Since birth, Kobato Mikoto was destined to be a sister.

She was an only child, yes, but it was the soul that resided within her that made her into a sister. A blessed sisterly soul made for a perfect sisterly sister, one that everyone would want for themselves.

And because she was an only child, the only outlet that she had for all that sisterly love was none other than her dear little cousin, Shun.

With their families living next to each other as neighbours, she had practically watched him grow up, had taken care of every little thing that she could for him.

Such was the beauty of the kind and angelic sister, Kobato Mikoto.

When Shun was younger, he had once declared that he would marry Mikoto when he grew up. This, Mikoto would often bring up, always ending with the upbeat reminder, “Don’t worry, I still remember that!” (even though the bridegroom in question had no apparent recollection of it whatsoever).

The mess in the living room was of epic proportions, and yet, Mikoto swallowed the barefaced lie Shun told her about a Kamaitachi (1) having miraculously appeared, contributing to the damage in the room.

Her only reply to it?

“Ah, so it was a natural disaster.”

However, Mikoto wasn’t quite so quick to believe what Shun said about the girl that she saw, despite the fact that he had pulled the best excuses out of his book.

“Could you please tell me what I just saw again?”

Seriously, her insistency could easily rival that of an FBI agent on a top secret mission.

“And Shun, what is this large ink stain?”

Damn it all, why was she so persistent?

Cold sweat beading on his forehead, Shun had barely managed to hide Rosalie before lying to his cousin, saying that he had had no idea what she was saying.

—

“Phew, I guess that’s all the cleaning up finally done now, huh?”

Removing her headband Mikoto heaved a sigh of relief as she surveyed the room, now sparkling clean with nary a crack or dusty patch visible. Shun really had to hand it to his cousin – her house keeping skills were amazing.

“T-Thanks, Miko-nee.”

Stuttering out his thanks, Shun snuck a wayward glance at the cupboard on the side.

It was in there that he had hid the fair Rosalie.

Just when Mikoto was coming to he had dragged Rosalie over to that cupboard and, with a whispered warning to stay still, had pushed her in and closed the doors.

So far so good.

Maybe, he could get away without giving away anything that happened today after all.

“O-Ouch!”

A dull thunk, followed by a yelp.

Or maybe not.

Shun was willing to bet that that sound was made courtesy of the dear Princess Rosalie, who had with her usual idiosyncrasy, just stood up in that cramped little cupboard, and banged her head hard against the top of it.

Indeed, Shun could feel her pain. His own headache was already starting to break out, albeit, due to an entirely different reason.

“What was that?!”

It was too late to force in a pretend cough, as Mikoto had already heard the bump and was narrowing her eyes suspiciously at Shun.

Desperate times called for desperate measures.

“O-Ouch! It hurts! It really hurts! I just went and banged against the table with my leg!”

A weak excuse, but Shun was a man on his last straws.

Fortunately for him, his pain seemed to have done the trick, bringing out the kind, motherly side of his cousin.

“Oh dear me, are you okay, Shun-chan?”

“A-Ah, I’m alright. You go ahead, don’t worry about me.”

Putting on a brave face for Miko-nee was one of the fail-safe ways to distract her and get rid of her suspicions.

“R-Really? You sure? You be careful then, alright?”

Turning her back on him, she resumed her task of puttering around the living room, straightening a little bit here and tidying the tools of that end there. Shun heaved a sigh of relief. Great, so now if he could just make it –

Bang!

“Shun, how long do you intend to – ”

Shatter!

“W-What in the world?! Shun-chan...?”

“All clear, Miko-nee! There’s absolutely nothing wrong with the cupboard, no siree!”

“B-But, that sound I heard just now...”

“A-Ah, that? That would be my pal on the other end. Remember, the one that was selling like hotcakes weeks ago? The talking robot?”

Right, he was left with no choice. Time to bring out the big guns – a mention of the word ‘robot’ and Mikoto would not even come within 10 feet of the cupboard. She hated them.

“I-I see. Okay then, well, it’s a little late I guess, but how about I start preparing for dinner?”

Mission accomplished.

“S-Say, Miko-nee, how about we have dinner in your place today, seeing as my house is, well, you know as well as I do how my living room was completely thrashed today.”

Shun knew that Mikoto would never deny him of anything.

A job well done and nothing revealed today.

—

“No!”

Mikoto’s vehement denial clearly threw Shun in for a loop.

“Shun, there’s all that vegetable in the fridge that has to be used up by today. I’ve already thought up a menu for it, and even a theme. How does ‘Onee-san’s 10 minutes curry’ sound to you?”

Seriously, he gave up. How the hell was it possible for someone to say something so crazy it seemed sane? And that someone was wearing a ridiculous spotted apron whilst humming a jarringly perky song at that.

The only reason Shun was (barely) restraining himself from chasing her out, was the fact that she had been cooking his dinner for him almost every day for the past year.

His father, having quit his job as an average salary man since Shun entered high school, believed that one only ought to show unconditional love and care to their children throughout puberty, and after that, they were on their own. He then went on to pursue his true dream of opening up a joint specializing in western cuisine, with Shun’s mother tagging along to help.

“Oh my, Papa’s so hot and attractive when he’s being a responsible father!”

“Oh no, Mama, I could never be hotter and more attractive than you!”

“Oh, Papa!”

“Oh, Mama!”

Hugs and kisses went around, and pink heart-shaped loves floated around the happy couple.

Oh god. Just thinking about that conversation was enough to start up Shun’s gagging reflexes. Geez, couldn’t those people act their age and just stop kissing around –

Anyways, due to that, Shun's parents now worked late into the night, and were always back late.

Mikoto, whose father too had been sent abroad for work, lived alone in Japan, and thus it became that both the cousins would always eat dinner together, with Mikoto being the one in charge of preparing the dishes.

Her expertise showed as she chopped the remaining meat and sliced the vegetables with practiced ease. Soon, the enticing smell of fried shallots wafted across the kitchen and into the living room.

Shun looked around.

Mikoto was completely absorbed in her cooking, and no one else was around. The coast was clear.

This was his chance.

He would grab Rosalie, make a run for it, and then hide her in the closest room he could find.

On the count of three, and one, two –

Growl.

The unmistakable sound of a stomach growling from hunger.

"Shun-chan, what was that...?"

Cover it. He had to think of a way to cover it.

"Oh man, I can't believe you heard me! That's so embarrassing!"

"Shun-chan, what is in that – "

"Hahaha, well, I am going through puberty after all! Need lots of food to keep my spirits up, Miko-nee!"

Shun interrupted Mikoto, forcefully bringing her questions to a close.

Something strange was definitely up. This, even someone as trusting and naïve as Mikoto, could see. Shifting her gaze, she glanced suspiciously at the cupboard in the corner.

Shun took a small step towards the right, blocking her gaze with an innocent, smiling face.

"Hahaha, Miko-nee!"

Fortunately for Shun, a small droplet of oil sparked out of the pan and Mikoto was forced to direct her attention back to the stove.

–

Unconsciously, Shun released the breath he had been holding.

"T-That's right, I'm going to watch television now, okay, Miko-nee?"

Without waiting for a reply, he turned on the TV and cranked up the volume. Hopefully, he'd be able to get away with things as they stood now, without explaining any further, with the noise from the telly covering for Rosalie's rumbling stomach.

Peace reigned for about five seconds. That is, until Mikoto tore open the bag of curry powder and threw it into the sizzling pan.

Almost simultaneously, as the aromatic smell of curry saturated the entire room, another loud rumble was emitted from the cupboard. And this time, it was too loud even for the white noise from the television to cover up.

Mikoto whipped around.

There it was again. He could practically sense the spirit of investigation in her, rivalling even that of an FBI agent's.

She strode towards the cupboard, determined to find out about its secrets.

"M-Miko-nee! Don't!"

Shun knew he had to do something, and fast.

Reacting reflexively he lunged towards Mikoto, his arms flung wide apart, stance mimicking that of a goalkeeper, desperate to keep the opponent's ball from entering the goal.

This time though, Mikoto was not about to be halted that easily.

"Move aside, Shun-chan."

It was that voice. And whenever she used that voice, Shun knew that his cousin was dead serious about something.

He had to stop her before she reached the cupboard.

It was do or die time.

Wrapping his arms tightly around his cousin, Shun resorted to his last technique, physical impediment.

—

"S-Shun-chan!"

Mikoto's face flushed red.

"N-No, don't be in such a hurry — "

W-What? What the hell was Miko-nee saying?

Shun could feel his cousin's body shivering. The base of her neck looked flushed, too.

Hmm...

This was strange. Why would she —

Wait, could it be?

No way.

Shun had belatedly realized that those hands of his were pushing against something soft and large. Looking down, he found them pushing against his cousin's voluminous breasts.

Oh great.

"N-No, Miko-nee! I didn't mean to —"

The staccato beat of his heart could easily reach a million miles per minute. Head spinning, Shun's eyes landed on the stove.

“Miko-nee, the food is burning!”

That apparently did the trick.

With a gasp of horror, Mikoto dashed towards the general area of the kitchen, in order to salvage her curry dish.

—

A short wait and the food was ready to be served.

“Come on Shun-chan! Dig in!”

Heartily piling the curry onto his dish, Shun ran a hand over his forehead, wiping away the cold sweat.

The most difficult part of the day was finally over.

As he spooned the first bite of curry into his mouth, his cousin had suddenly lifted her face, and remarked, “Ah, wait, I forgot to bring out the desserts! I’ve got to go and get it later!”

Shun nodded absently. Dessert sounded good.

“You’ll love desserts today, Shun-chan! It’s your favourite, cream puffs!”

Boom!

The cupboard door opened, and Rosalie appeared.

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TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

(1) Kamaitachi – An ancient monster native to Japan that has sickles for hands and is the harbinger of calamity and ill fortune.

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 6

Episode 6:

“|-|-|-”

Things were looking really bad.

“That is, I can explain-”

Mikoto’s fury was ice cold. So much so that Shun could see, rather than feel, the shards of ice forming around her.

The only other time this had happened was when those damned pornography magazines had been found in the house.

Shit.

Shun realized that he was in deep, deep trouble.

Mikoto shifted her piercing gaze from her quaking cousin to the pink – or in this case, blonde – elephant in the room, watching the girl devour the food off the table at the speed of light.

It seemed as though the command need only be given once. Rosalie could then consciously activate said ‘skill’ or ‘command’ by herself, without awaiting another input from Shun.

Great! That was just great!

She really seemed to enjoy her newfound ‘eating’ skill too, attacking the food on the table with gusto, as her puffy cheeks glowed in satisfaction.

Even with a dabble of curry running down her chin she looked every inch the hero that she was. Shun couldn’t help but heave a sigh at the sight.

Rosalie really was gorgeous.

—

“Is this supposed to be some sort of cosplay?”

Shun decided that it would be best, for now, to just go with the flow.

“Y-Yeah, haven’t you heard, Miko-nee? These things are really popular amongst westerners too, and —”

Chancing a glance at Mikoto, Shun faltered, and eventually gave up. The anger seeping from her pores were no joke.

The silence between seemed to stretch on for an eternity before the fateful question, “Who is she?”

“...”

Shun stared at Mikoto in silence.

Her eyes welling with tears, Mikoto returned Shun’s stare.

Damnit!

The situation was exactly the same as that time when those pornographic magazines were found. Shun would really have liked to laugh at the similarity of the situations, if only the pressure weren’t so suffocating this time around.

Also, he like a few pictures of Rosalie stuffing her mouth.

What, you don’t get a warrior princess at your dinner table ever so often, do you?

The whole thing was really such a waste.

As Mikoto shifted to stare at the girl devouring her cooking like a ravenous wolf, Rosalie placed her empty bowl and spoon reverently on the table, and for the first time since the entire thing begun, lifted her beautiful blue eyes to stare at Mikoto.

Being on the receiving end of Rosalie’s beautiful gaze, Mikoto too seemed to soften, slight though it was. Then, grudgingly, she stood up and went to refill Rosalie’s bowl with rice.

The pressure seemed to dissipate almost immediately. Heaving a sigh of relief, Shun picked up his spoon to continue his meal.

Maybe, they could all have a nice peaceful dinner and –

Shun looked up to find Rosalie staring disconcertedly at the television.

That flipping feeling returned in the pits of his stomach.

Uh-oh.

–

“Is that a dwarf?”

Shun turned to stare at Rosalie, who in turn, was staring hard at the commentator on the television.

You see, the game designers didn’t think to put in a television into “Dragon Bless”. Thus, upon seeing this miraculous gadget, whereupon people became smaller once they entered, Rosalie was entranced.

Standing up, Rosalie walked over to the television and bent down for a closer look.

“Rosalie, that’s –”

“I wish to talk to you.”

Rosalie directed her request at the commentator on the screen, completely and utterly ignoring Shun.

Now it was the commentator’s turn, “Yes, you there, it’s just as you say!”

“Who is he talking to? I’m the only one here. Hello there, this is Rosalie.” Ever the polite princess, Rosalie stuck her

hand out in greeting.

A scene change and Rosalie found herself faced with the image of a studio, where moments before, the commentator's face had been.

The shock in Rosalie's face said it all – What the hell was this?

Backing away, her back hit the solid wooden table, upsetting all the plates and dishes, cups and cutleries placed upon it.

With baited breathe and one hand holding on tightly to the pendant dangling from her slender neck, Rosalie watched the television screen with such intensity it hurt.

Mikoto, to her credit, was just as surprised as Shun upon seeing this.

“Is she from a really far away country?”

—

Shun wanted to cry from the helplessness of the situation. No really, he did.

But then again, Mikoto had just given him the perfect hook to get out of it.

Oh well, beggars can't be choosers. He just had to suck it up and cover for Rosalie the best he could.

“Oh Miko-nee, how could you not have known? It's really poor out there in some parts of Eastern Europe. My world history teacher just told us all about the current situation in some of the old satellite countries of the dissolved Soviet Union. And man, don't even get me started on their clothing —”

“Shun-chan, please shut up.”

Well, that was quick.

Placing the now-full bowl of rice on top of the table, Mikoto placed her hands at her hips and assumed a dominating stance.

Mikoto, battle mode complete.

“Hey!”

A determined look on her face, Mikoto called out to the enemy.

Rosalie turned.

Shun felt the table tremble. Looking down, he noticed that Mikoto's legs were quaking in fear.

“W-Who are you?”

—

Please.

Please.

Please.

Whatever you say, please don't let it be anything about you being a heroine or whatnot.

“S-Speak! What is your relationship with Shun-chan?”

Shun felt the blood drain from his face.

They were entering dangerous territory. That great big neon sign in the sky said so.

Please!

Shun desperately tried to convey his thoughts to Rosalie via eye contact.

Rosalie, for her part, actually seemed to notice Shun for once, and nodding slightly, indicated that Shun should just leave the rest to her.

A small bit of relief crept back into Shun’s heart. Maybe, just maybe, he could trust her on this one after all.

Then, puffing her chest out in pride, Rosalie answered in a clear, booming voice, “I am Shun’s bride!”

W-What?!

The temperature in the room instantly dropped below the freezing point.

—

“B-Bride?”

“Yes, bride.”

Shun really wished he was somewhere else other than where he was right then.

At least, there it would be warmer.

Having delivered the death blow to Mikoto, Rosalie now shifted her gaze to look directly at Shun. Her confident smile conveyed a myriad of things – Yes! I did it! I was awesome wasn’t I?

None of them though were even remotely accurate.

Shun wanted to grab Rosalie and shake her.

His head hurt. God help him.

Mikoto on the other hand had turned as white as a sheet, soul seemingly having escaped from her body through her hanging mouth as a result of a shock of that magnitude.

Rosalie though, having zero sense of the damage she had caused, casually turned towards Mikoto and approached her with a friendly smile.

“Anyways, your name’s Mikoto, isn’t it?”

Unknowingly, Rosalie had just served the first ball.

—

The sound of her name brought Mikoto crashing back down to the bizarre reality.

With the heavy dignity akin to that of someone imparting an important decision, Rosalie eyed Mikoto and pronounced her question, “May I ask, what miraculous creatures are those ‘cream puffs’?”

Mikoto looked almost ready to faint.

If Shun had thought that the situation couldn't have gotten any worse, then he was wrong. Oh so wrong.

"Right, moving on, we have some breaking news. The worldwide phenomenon, 'Dragon Bless' that has millions of gamers hooked on to it, has hit a wall, in the form of a glitch that –"

In the silence of the room, the news anchor's voice boomed forth in all its deep, grave glory.

W-What the?!

Reaching for the controller at the speed of light, Shun was about to shut down that nosy commentator once and for all, when suddenly, he found Mikoto staring daggers at him.

Silently, he dropped the controller. It was no use.

Worrying her bottom lip, Mikoto did her best to convey and radiate all of her pent-up anger and hate towards Shun.

"According to the internet, this strange glitch occurred at exactly the same time worldwide."

By now, even Shun could no longer deny the fact that both Mikoto and Rosalie were absorbed by the news.

If they ever found out that – But no, he couldn't imagine the resulting chaos. All he could do now was to hold his breath and pray.

"The main character of this game, Rosalie, actually went –"

Upon hearing her name, Rosalie's ears gave a slight twitch. She turned to face the television, her face a paragon of calmness and unruffled beauty.

Argh.

This was hopeless. He might as well just give up at this point.

On the bright side though, at least now he wouldn't have to go around hiding anything or making up more lies or excuses. Seeing as the truth was finally out, after all.

Bracing himself, he alternated between watching Rosalie's expressions and the television.

The introduction scene to the game, Dragon Bless, rolled onto the television screen. The big bad monster that players would have found themselves fighting took up most of the screen space.

Flick, and it was almost as if a switch had been turned on inside Rosalie.

The sweet, innocent girl had been banished, and in her place was a warrior who emitted such a strong battle aura that she was impossible to ignore.

Within seconds, Rosalie had unsheathed her sword, and was already assuming a battle stance.

—

"No, Rosalie, don't!"

At a speed that even surprised himself, Shun threw himself bodily on Rosalie, clinging on to her back in an attempt to prevent her from slicing the television in two.

Despite being the strong warrior that she was Rosalie was unable to defend against such an ambush.

Falling to the ground, both of their weights supported only by the holy sword that Rosalie held in one hand, it was no wonder that even a sword of that calibre broke.

The tip of the sword, sharp and chipped, ragged in all its holy glory, flew in a beautiful arc in the air.

Only to stop right in front of the tip of Mikoto's nose.

“ ... ”

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 7

Episode 7:

Carrying his unconscious cousin back to her house, then lifting her to gently place her on to the bed, Shun let out a sigh of relief.

Mikoto's room, the décor, the spacing, the furniture of it even, all served to showcase her gentle beauty and sweet, naïve nature. Childish flowers were sprinkled on the patterned bed sheets and the room had been decorated to a harmonious effect by Mikoto's magical fingers.

Shun had always spent more than a little time here, homework and lesson plans spread out upon a low study table, as Mikoto went through everything with him. He really would have rather been at home, bashing away at his computer, but Mikoto would not allow it, oh no. With tears in her eyes, Mikoto would come up to Shun and almost forcibly coerce him into studying with her in a vain attempt to improve his failing grades, especially when it came to the maths and sciences.

Now though, with only the dim light filtering in from the window and Mikoto's light, peaceful breathing, Shun finally felt a sense of calmness wash over him.

Now, he could finally think.

—

Why?

Why did everything happen?

It was unrealistic, unthinkable, that a game character would dash out from the game into real life.

It was impossible.

So then, why did it happen?

Argh...!!

If this were a plot in an anime or manga, the truth ought to be revealed pretty soon, and yet —

Suddenly, Shun's mind went blank.

For a few short moments, his mind just wouldn't, just refused to work.

“ ... ”

Drawing a deep breathe, Shun strove to calm himself down.

This had always happened anyways.

Whenever Shun tried to picture something unrealistic in his mind, this would always happen. His mind would go blank and nothing would move it further past that point.

In other words, Shun was unable to 'imagine'.

Yes, the inability to imagine. Shun considered it a disability in a world where imagination was necessary.

This comprehension had dawned on him ever since he had developed conscious actions.

A little confusing, no? An explanation was in order.

Let's say, for example, if one were to imagine oneself turning into a dragon. A normal person would be able to do it within a matter of seconds.

Shun, on the other hand, could not.

Whenever he tried to imagine something out of the ordinary, it was as if he had deliberately run headfirst into a wall, and should he try to forcibly push past that blockage, he would be faced with a vast skyline of nothingness.

This handicap was more pronounced when Shun was a young kid.

He could never play 'pretend' with his friends when they were younger, as this required imagination of a certain proportion. He never managed to fully enjoy himself, or to immerse himself in the moment, like the rest of his friends. And then, when he told them of it, they couldn't understand him – imagination came to them so naturally that soon, he found himself isolated and left out of the hoop.

So it came to be that whenever they played around he would always find himself alone on the bench in the Shrine's park, crying silent tears, cursing himself for this crushing disability.

—

Of course, he could watch anime, just like everyone else did. Read manga too, in fact.

However, the fact still stood that these two activities needed one to be able to picture the scenario in their minds and add on a relative amount of emotions into the imagined situation before being able to thoroughly enjoy the following results.

Due to his lack of imagination, Shun had felt this precursor stronger than anyone.

Due to his lack of imagination, Shun did not find these interesting. Not in the least bit.

...

And then, it appeared.

The holy grail of Shun's life, the one that saved him from all that crushing loneliness – games.

This was especially the case for that one game, Dragon Bless. A national sensation in the game world, critics called it.

Shun would never forget the almost explosive joy when he first cracked open the box and slipped the gaming disc into the console.

Even though Dragon Bless took place on an imaginary plane, while Shun was playing the game in real life, the

game was, in essence, part of Shun's 'real' life.

For the first time in his entire life, Shun could slip through a loophole in his disability and 'imagine' the 'reality' of the game.

Also, it didn't hurt that it was the hottest thing of the moment.

He was ecstatic. Really, he was. If he could, he would go on adventures, day after day after day, without ever needing for a stop or a rest.

The moment when, after all members had gathered in the guild hall, the grand, gorgeous musical and atmospheric change; the moment when he was about to step into a land of snow, ready to battle unknown beasts with strange powers; the moment when he stepped into the boss's dungeon, hands sweating and the suspense sending his heart into palpitations...

He could go on with these forever.

His friends let him back into the ring, now that they finally had a common topic, something all of them were crazy about. His phone rang when people called to tell him of the newest updates, or the secret passage leading into a bonus level.

Things were looking up. He was no longer alone.

Therefore, Shun could not deny it when others laughed and called him a 'Dragon Bless' addict. The current Shun was only here because of the game. He loved the game and he loved it with all his heart.

And then, this happened.

The heroine that he had always admired, the princess warrior Rosalie, appeared right before his very eyes.

—

"This isn't happening. It is — She is a fake!"

Ironically, the first thing that came to mind when he thought of Rosalie was of her, stuffing her mouth with curry, without a heed to the situation she was in.

T-T-That couldn't be the heroine that he had worshipped, could it?

That was just another blonde bimbo.

Yes, that had to be it.

Somehow though, he couldn't really convince that niggling doubt in his mind that this Rosalie was a fake.

His mind flashed back to the cut scenes in Dragon Bless. Rosalie was always, in every one of them, evoking some inane conversation, and somehow ending up in a fight. And most of the time, that fight became the start of an adventure.

In other words, her 'dedication towards her duty' and her 'unsuspecting naivety' — the very same traits that had made her so appealing in the game, now translated to a collective bunch of uselessness and annoyance in the real world.

Sigh.

There really was no choice, was there. Rosalie was here. In the flesh.

The unannounced intruding of people's drawers, the inane suggestion that they start a correspondence, the use of a toilet, the loud growling of her stomach, the mess she made on her face when she ate the cream puffs – all those were definitely the traits of Rosalie, the clueless, uneducated, guileless princess warrior.

...

Shun could practically hear his heart break upon such a cruel revelation about his idol.

Breathing in deeply, Shun was about to leave the room when he felt something, or rather, someone, grab his hand.

—

"Shun-chan."

Lying flat on her back, Mikoto had shot her hand out to grab Shun.

"A-Ah, Miko-nee, you're awake."

"Do you love that girl, Shun-chan?"

Shun heart skipped a beat.

"Err..."

"Is she your lover?"

"N-No."

"But, she's your bride, isn't she?"

"No! She's – argh! There's been some kind of mistake!"

Fumbling through his answer, Shun looked down, only to find Mikoto peeking out at him from under her long lashes.

Something was definitely going on.

"... I see."

And with that, she released her vice-like grip on Shun's hand, her relief at Shun's denial practically palpable.

"Y-You know, I think that someone more put together is better for you, Shun-chan."

"Huh?"

An unintelligible response was the best that Shun could muster then. For some reason, Mikoto was resolutely looking away from him.

"Well, for example, someone who's known you very well ever since you were a kid. Someone who's slightly older than you, just that slight bit older – maybe that someone would be perfect for you, Shun-chan."

W-What?

What was Miko-nee even talking about all of a sudden?!

Shun was confused. Very much so.

"So, what do you think, Shun-chan?"

“Well, I don’t really know –“

“A-Anyways, whatever it is, that girl is a definite no. A one hundred percent no. Sure, I mean, she’s pretty and all, but she’s still a foreigner, and a lot of problems will arise due to that. W-Well, at least, that’s what I-I think. F-From the point of view of one who’s had more life experience than you, o-of course. Like, I mean to say, if you did date her, and then there will be –“

Mikoto’s ramblings came to an abrupt end.

Yet again, she seemed to have fainted dead away.

—

Rosalie, on the other hand, was sitting, fingers interlaced, on the floor, intently watching the moving screen on the television.

She’d heard an explanation from Shun regarding the television – something about it being an item that showed things happening in a faraway place. However, that only served to intensify her interest in this strange item.

Upon seeing anything foreign to her, or hearing strange sounds coming from the television, she would give a yelp and start shaking like some forlorn puppy, but never once did she avert her gaze.

“Those bastards! They’re completely unfazed, even when us citizens are working until we drop.”

This was a continuation of that news programme. Today, a debate regarding the increase in tax was the main topic.

The debate involved many fancy terms, none of which Rosalie understood. Still –

“They’re not even human!”

Well, for a news programme, they sure were throwing around some exaggerative comments.

“They’re using the sweat and blood of us normal folk to fill in that huge hole that they’ve dug for themselves in Japan’s economy. It’s a lake of blood, that’s what it is!”

“Indeed, a lake of blood.”

“I second that! A bunch of monsters, they are! Our parliament is being run by a bunch of monsters!”

“Then, the prime minister would be –“

“The prime minister would be the Demon King!”

...

Seconds later, Shun felt a gust of wind in his face.

Rosalie was gone.

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 8

Episode 8:

“Where is this ‘Assembly Hall’?”

Having realized that, after dashing out of the front door in a surge of heroic pride, she was unfamiliar with this so-called ‘Assembly Hall’ and had utterly no idea regarding its whereabouts, Rosalie stopped a middle-aged couple happening by in order to ask them the faithful question.

Her rather strange appearance seemed to shock the couple, but it didn’t take them long to find their feet, even when faced with such an odd situation.

“By ‘Assembly Hall’, you mean...?”

“Ah, you must be looking for the National Assembly Hall, right?”

“That’s right. I wish to go there.”

Her delicate features had hardened, conveying her seriousness regarding the situation.

“I have a duty that I must perform. I must go there.”

The couple, hearing the timbre in her voice, felt her unwavering determination and immediately gathered that something important must be up.

“In that case dear, do you know how to ride a train?”

“T-Train –?”

As Rosalie scratched her head in confusion, the male half of the couple seemed to have come to a decision.

“Mama.”

“Yes, Papa?”

“What we do now, our every word and action, can cause this girl’s impression of the Japanese people to change, for better or worse.”

“Oh my, Papa! You’re taking the macro view of everything, that’s what makes you so irresistible!”

“Oh no, Mama! You’re the one who’s irresistible! Anyways, if we leave her with a good impression here, I’m sure she’ll return to her country and tell everyone about it. At this moment, we are, even in some small way, standing at the pitch as Japan’s representatives!”

"Papa, you always have such a clear and decisive view of everything!"

...

What a youthful couple indeed.

"In that case, what is there to even consider? We should personally escort her wherever she wishes to go!"

"We'll go anywhere with her, be it fiery chasms filled with monsters or through where the devil resides in the deep blue sea!"

And there you have it. Rosalie had just gone and gotten herself an escort service.

Just before leaving though, the woman pulled a small cell phone out of her bag.

"That's right! We've got to tell Shun-chan about this too!"

—

Rosalie was gone.

"Rosalie...?"

Shun looked blankly around the living room. In the silence that followed, the sound from the television rang out loud and clear.

"That prime minister, he's the king of demons! The ruling party is the demon's army, and the assembly hall is their evil fort! This has all been predicted! The truth is, having dedicated years of my life to the research of the Holy Scriptures —"

"And now, time for the commercials! We'll be back soon after the break."

Shun turned to look at the television, speechless.

N-No way! She couldn't have... could she?

Shaking his head, Shun tried to wipe clean that sinking dread at the pit of his stomach.

Knowing her, she's probably just upstairs opening some drawers. He'd better go look for her now before —

"Beep, beep! You have one unread message."

From his pocket came the uniform, automated voice of the telephone operator.

Snatching his phone, he flipped it open, proceeding to read the message before completely and utterly turning into ice.

—

Sender: Mama

We're now escorting a foreign girl (She seems to be super into cosplay! So cute, loves!) to the National Assembly Hall. Managed to come home early for once, but, like, you know, we're out on Japanese Representative (Isn't this just so cool!) business. I know, it's too bad, isn't it, dearie. >.<

Well, farewell! Until we meet again!

—

By the way, just as a side note, you should know that Shun had already gotten used to his parents immature ways by now.

—

Shun lived in Shikishima, a huge city with a population count of around 10 million people.

From there, it would take one about 30 minutes on the Chūō Line to reach Shinjuku, which was at the heart of the city, and at the next stop, the Yotsuya station, a change of trains to the Marunouchi Line. Then, another two stations away from there and one would arrive at the National Assembly Hall.

“Well then, this is where we part ways.”

Emerging from the exit of the underground station, Rosalie bid farewell to the couple.

“Right, Rosalie-chan. We’ll be heading off first, okay?”

“The main entrance to the National Assembly Hall is just right beyond that corner, dear. Now remember, as soon as you’re done with whatever you have to do, come home to us. We’ll be waiting for you.”

The couple’s attitude towards Rosalie had, very obviously, undergone some major changes, perhaps due to the interactions between them as they journeyed with her.

“Rosalie-chan, you’re almost like our very own daughter now!”

In response to the couple’s overwhelming display of warmth and affection Rosalie gave a very awkward nod. Then, lifting a dainty foot, she headed determinedly towards her goal. Walking along a pathway lined with Ginkgo trees, beyond tall iron fences lay the National Assembly Hall, lit up with bright starry lights within an inch of its life.

—

“This castle is extremely unsettling.”

Rosalie muttered under her breath while staring at the passing buildings.

Couldn’t blame her, really. What with all those whitewashed, new-fangled buildings around the city, clouding over the night sky, it was no wonder that Rosalie found it creepy.

And then, within a few minutes of strange architecture, she found herself planted right at the doorstep of the National Assembly Hall. Bravely stepping forward, Rosalie was about to reach for the door when suddenly –

“Excuse me, miss!”

A security guard had halted her. Rosalie’s confusion was apparent.

“May I enquire what business you have here, miss?”

As was the beauty of the Japanese culture, he remained unfailingly polite, even given the strange circumstances.

“Is this the place known as the ‘Assembly Hall’?”

Rosalie shot him down with her own question.

“Yes, indeed it is.”

An affirmative.

By that time, more security guards had already gathered around to watch the scene, especially given Rosalie's rather uncommon choice of clothing. In fact, there seemed to be more guards around that day, as compared to the usual two or three.

Maybe someone got worried after hearing the rumours of the terrorist acts online.

Another guard piped up with a question.

"What is going on here?"

"Err... Well, you see..."

"Are you here for an educational visit, miss? If so, I do apologize, as the National Assembly Hall is already closed for today and –"

Argh, all that noise was really getting to her!

Grasping her pendant, Rosalie pulled out her sword.

–

"I've come here to slay the one known as the 'prime minister'."

The security guards, in their surprise, had turned into pillars of salt.

"I am a heroine! In order to save the people of this world from their suffering, I will beat the evil 'prime minister'! That's the reason why I have come here!"

A declaration of war, followed by a flourish of her sword. A secret treasure of the dragon tribe, the sword's body glowed an ethereal white underneath the dark night sky of Tokyo.

Sensing the danger, the security guards immediately regained their senses.

"Please move aside."

Rosalie's voice was steely and her eyes flashed.

As one, the security guards stepped back and held up their thin metal bats. A show of dedication that was worthy of praise.

People from everywhere started crowding around the area. Some ran down from the bus parked opposite, others stopped short in whatever they were doing just to watch the scene unfold.

Awkward though it was, Rosalie could feel wisps of enmity directed at her from the people surrounding her. Raising her sword, she swung the tip down, a trace of light following the path of her swing.

Her voice echoing through the clouds, Rosalie gave a declaration.

"In that case, I have no choice."

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Season 1, Episode 9

Episode 9:

Minutes later, Shun arrived at the train station. Hurrying along the dimly lit platform, he felt an insurmountable dread build in the pits of his stomach.

Damn it! Why won't they pick up?

He'd called his parents at least ten times since that last message, and yet, each time he was directed towards that annoying voicemail. Nor had they texted him to tell him about their whereabouts.

Oh god...

If Rosalie had somehow deliberately misconstrued the television news anchor and thus mistaken the prime minister as some sort of Demon Overlord...?

Unbidden, the desolate image of his previously slandered living room flashed in Shun's mind. All that destruction, and Rosalie had only just waved her sword once over.

Please, please, let this simply be me overreacting this time!

Thoughts of horror and devastation were threatening to overrun his mind.

Imagine what would happen if –

Once again, Shun found himself facing a blank. Clearly, what would have happened should Rosalie actually attack the Assembly Hall was classified as 'unreal', hence his handicap acted up again, wiping his slate clean and preventing him from imagining.

Regardless, Shun hurried up the steps, eager to find Rosalie.

Just then, his phone sounded.

A mail! At last!

In his excitement, Shun overlooked the fact that he was currently speeding full force up the stairs.

As such, predictably, he tripped and fell.

"Ouch!"

His arm had been twisted in the fall.

Damn it all!

This had better be worth it.

—

Cutting through the haze of pain, Shun reached for his phone – only to find out that the mail he had been excitedly anticipating was a complete sham.

Yes, there was a mail. But it wasn't from his parents. Oh no. It was, yet again, from his annoying no-good friend, Uehara."

... The hell?!

Shun debated between just ignoring the mail, or reading it and then ignoring the mail. Deciding to give his friend the benefit of the doubt one last time, he clicked it open.

In black and white, his friend's excitement screamed at him from beyond caps lock of the digital screen.

CHECK OUT THE TELLY!!! TERRORISTS ARE FINALLY HERE!!!

...

Terrorists?!

Thinking that it must have been something that Rosalie did, Shun pressed a few buttons on his telephone, changing it to television mode.

Immediately, an emergency news panel popped up on the screen. Out of breath, looking as if she too had just arrived on scene, the main news anchor of the TV station turned to face the camera.

"... I repeat, about 20 minutes ago, six F-IV fighter jets, which are as yet, still under maintenance, were forcefully taken from Aoi Heavy Industries plane hangar. The fighter jets took off earlier today, eye witnesses stating they were headed towards Tokyo. Our country's Self Defence Forces will be working together with the American military –"

Switching to another channel, Shun watched as the official of some country or the other declared their stance on the situation.

"Our government's cooperation in international affairs: Opposition forces against the liberalisation of the country were seen heading towards Japan. Again, we wish to stress the fact that our government has nothing to do with this turn of events –"

Okay, this wasn't much use. Moving on.

"Please hold on as we try to connect to –"

Shun slammed his phone shut.

Well, that rumour on the internet about terrorist movements seems to have come true.

Resuming his stance, Shun clambered up the remaining steps and finally came out into the open.

What he saw then, really surprised him.

Why's there nobody here?!

—

This was Shun's first ever visit to the National Assembly Hall, hence his serious lack of comparison material.

However, he was pretty sure that it had never ever been as quiet as it was right then.

This was, after all, the heart of Japan.

So, why was it that there was nary a soul around and the roads were mostly empty and deserted?

...

Come to think of it, even back then, down at the train station, he did notice some people with very odd looks on their face, almost as if they were –

The terrorist attack!

That must be it! The National Assembly Hall, important as it was to the government of Japan, was likely a high priority target on the terrorists' list of places to attack.

Great, so now what?!

Shun was at a complete loss. Stopping dead in his tracks, he stood and pondered as he weighed his options on a balance scale.

Should he go on and continue his search for Rosalie? Or should he run away and high tail it out with his life intact? Worry and self-preservation were warring within himself until finally –

Worry for Rosalie won out.

He would go search for her.

Up until that bend over there, that is.

Once he had passed that bend he just needed to turn up and then he'd be able to see the front gate of the National Assembly Hall.

For the time being, that was going to have to do.

Maybe Rosalie had even gone over to some place safe with his parents, to hide from the danger! Maybe, he needn't even worry at all!

Clutching to his positive thoughts, Shun took a deep breathe, and in small, measured steps, he moved up to the corner and turned.

...

There she was!

"Rosalie!"

—

Heaving a huge sigh of relief, Shun raced up to her. As he came into sight, Rosalie greeted him with a surprised blink.

"Rosalie, these people...?"

Ten or so burly men dressed in guard uniforms were lying unconscious on the ground.

"I put them to sleep with a spell. They might be the Demon Overlord's henchmen, but they're still human. I wouldn't want to hurt them."

Taking a breather, she followed up her comment with yet another surprising declaration.

"Shun, I will now go on to defeat the Demon Overload, Mr Prime Minister, and return peace to the world. Please, just leave everything to me."

That dazzling heroine smile that she bestowed him at the end, he very nearly got taken in by that.

Fortunately, Shun stood firm.

"No, you're wrong."

Grabbing Rosalie by the hand, he turned as if to leave, hurrying her along.

"Come on, let's get out of here, quick!"

"Shun, what are you saying? I'm about to go and defeat —"

"I'll explain later. Let's just get going first!"

The words had barely left his mouth when a dark shadow appeared overhead.

Six bird-like figures were flying by, lined up horizontally in a straight line. Staring up, the sound of a jet engine tearing through the sky reached their ears.

The fighter jets.

"Rosalie!"

Shun tugged hard at her hand, now seriously frightened for his life.

Rosalie didn't move a muscle.

"Hurry! Let's go!"

"Go? Go where? Why are we going anywhere?"

Pointing upwards towards the flying machinery, Shun uttered in despair, "Rosalie, look, those are fighter jets! You hear me?! Fighter jets!"

—

Almost nonchalantly, Rosalie arched her neck gracefully and took a long hard look at the distant sky.

"...Are those demons as well?"

As if sensing an opening, Shun immediately jumped in with a stuttering reply.

"T-That's right! That's right! Those things are demons! Big, dangerous, ugly demons! Now let's get going before —"

Bang!

The sound of a missile being launched rang out loud and clear.

Shun couldn't help but watch as the unfamiliar figures of the large fighter jets loomed closer. With a showy spray of

smoke and fire, the missiles were shot out from the alcoves of the winged fighter jets, two at a time, until a total of twelve missiles had been launched.

Milliseconds, and the missiles were closing in.

It was a literal blinding flash of white light.

So this was what it was like to be hunted.

It dawned on Shun that this gigantic pile of metal, nay, weaponry, was something that normal humans couldn't even hope to withstand.

Coming to a standstill, Shun couldn't even take his eyes off that harbinger of death and destruction.

This is how it's going to end, huh?

—

"Don't worry, Shun. I won't let those things harm a hair on your head."

Turning around to face him, Rosalie gave a confident little nod and grasped his limp hand.

"I am a heroine, Shun. As am I your bride."

A beautiful, bedazzling smile lit up her face.

Shun felt something tug at his heartstrings at that charming grin.

Gently, she let go of their intertwined hands and raised an open palm up towards the night sky.

In the face of the missiles honing in on them at supersonic speed, Rosalie parted her lips and sang out in a lilting tone of voice —

"Begoula!"

A wall of fire sprang to life, swallowing up the missiles whole.

Twelve intense bursts of fire bloomed upon collision with the crimson wall of flames.

The subsequent flash of blinding orange lit up the night sky more so than any sun of high noon.

Immediately after came the explosion.

The force of it came at Shun in waves, overwhelming him.

His skin was probably getting peeled at nano levels.

Looking out at the sea of fire and devastation before him, Shun felt a tremor of fear travel up his spine.

Just seconds ago those incredibly powerful missiles were baring their fangs, rushing towards them.

Now? They were no better than garbage to be discarded.

"..."

Shun's gob fell open, bearing an uncanny resemblance to an awestruck troll.

Rosalie on the other hand was standing ramrod straight, hand held out with nary a quiver, looking as proud and dignified as ever. The wind that swept up her hair and mantle, for some strange reason, only served to further highlight her beauty.

—

From his experience in-game, Shun knew that “Begoula” was a mid-level spell wherein the user would use flames to deal roughly 40 damage points to the enemy group.

In the latter half of the game this spell was completely useless.

Now though, as Shun watched the pillars of flame lick the night skies of Tokyo, he was forced to reassess his judgement. In real life, roughly 100 metres of flame would form a wall that seemed to stretch almost halfway up to the sky. To add to that, it held enough destructive power to completely decimate twelve high tech homing missiles almost instantly.

If that wasn’t enough to change someone’s stance on its power, nothing would.

Through the smog and debris, a sharp sound of a jet engine was heard.

Not wanting to give the enemy time to regroup and consider their next step, Rosalie followed up immediately with another spell.

“Ethel!”

Six pillars of light shot down from the sky.

A sound, not unlike that of glass shattering, resounded.

The pure, holy light had just pierced right through the fighter jets, almost as if they were paper.

Shun could have sworn that time froze then.

In fact, he could even claim to have experienced those bizarre moments when things seemed to slow down infinitely.

One.

Two.

Boom!

Through the thick smoke that clouded the night sky, Shun saw parachutes floating down to the ground.

Unconsciously, he let out the breath he had been holding.

Well, at least no one died.

—

Running through the Dragon Bless attack appendix in his mind, Shun tried to remember the exact details about what he had read up on “Ethel”.

“Ethel” was an attack spell unique to the hero of the game, in this case, Rosalie. Holy pillars of light would shoot down from the sky, causing roughly 80 damage points to all enemies.

It was only after witnessing its prowess in real life though that Shun did truly understand what a terrifying spell it

was.

With that single bolt of descending light a fighter jet, costing approximately 13 million yen and equipped with some of the best technology that humans had to offer, was blown into smithereens.

All that, and Rosalie made it seem effortless. Graceful even.

Shun could practically feel the sky quaking as an aftereffect of that powerful spell.

The resulting earthquake and billowing flames too continued for several long moments.

Emotions – fear, terror, awe, respect; were welling up inside of him, warring for attention.

So this was it.

So this was the power of a spell.

What Dragon Bless never managed to convey across the digital screen, when seen in real life, Shun could completely understand the true fear of the enemies facing these spells.

The power, the magnitude, the intensity of these spells. They were just magnificent.

Magnificent and terrifying.

His goose bumps rose to attention. But not out of fear, oh no. Far from that.

Shun was incredibly impressed.

–

The sound of a jet engine roared overhead.

Looking up, Rosalie and Shun both caught sight of a last remaining fighter jet. It had very nearly dodged Rosalie's attack just now when it went in for an emergency turn.

Seems as if it was still too early to celebrate.

A few complicated manoeuvres and the pilot had turned the plane around at an extremely acute angle, retreating from the scene of action at high speed.

Further and further he left, the terrifying sound of the jet engine slowly dying away until he was finally out of sight.

Shun started to panic.

With the situation as it was, there was no way one could tell where the missiles would be coming from, nor where the terrorist intended to bomb next.

A flashback to the memorial 911 terrorist attack in America.

What if this pilot crashed the jet purposefully into a building too?!

Shun felt like simultaneously peeing his pants, and staying put to watch the action unfold.

Oh God, what if –

His train of thought was suddenly cut off when from the corner of his eyes came a sharp, blinding light.

Rosalie's whole self was glowing, wrapped in a blinding flash of light.

Shun stepped back, overwhelmed.

It was almost as if he could feel a suffocating-like pressure from all that light.

Could this be Rosalie's aura?

Then, as the dazzling white light that enveloped her grew stronger, Rosalie's sharp features started to shine.

She looked as though she had been sheathed in a thin mantle with the seven vivid colours of the rainbow.

...enveloped in an aura shining like the rainbow –

Something clicked into place in Shun's mind.

He recognized this.

This was Rosalie's ultimate skill.

Raising her sword towards the sky, the light enveloping her body slowly shifted towards the sword and the right arm that was holding it, concentrating its essence on those areas.

The shining arm that was holding her sword – that was Rosalie's "Arm of Silver".

Fixing her gaze upon the tiny spot in the horizon that was the last remaining fighter jet, Rosalie adjusted her arm, which had become one with her sword.

And then –

"Kraus Soras"

–

Leaping up into the sky, Rosalie flew, with her raised glowing sword and wind strewn mantle, racing after the fighter jet on an invisible path in the sky.

The street lights lit up the buildings in front of the National Assembly Hall, reflecting dim red light into the night sky.

Watching as she raced up into the sky, Shun was reminded of a shooting star.

Her speed had long surpassed that of sound, and as she closed in on the fighter jet Shun could have sworn he saw broad strokes of bright light lingering after her.

"Kraus Soras" was an attack skill learnt when the hero achieved the high stratus of level 90.

Considered a partial hidden skill, this ultimate technique was normally used to start off an attack in-game as it had a 100% accuracy rate and would completely disregard any special skill or defence status of the enemy. Add that to the immense damage that this attack deals – approximately 1000 damage points and it could even be said that there was no attack stronger than this in the entire game.

Ever the game addict though, Shun managed to find something odd about Rosalie's attack this time.

"Kraus Soras" was an all-powerful attack. However, it was not described anywhere in the game as allowing the user to fly into the sky after the target.

Strange.

...100% accuracy rate...

That had to be it!

In order to follow through with that setting, the attack had manifested itself in such a way so as to allow the user a guaranteed hit in real life.

As such, this had created a loophole that enabled Rosalie to fly in the sky of the real world, racing like a shooting star towards the fighter jet.

And then, she pierced through it.

—

A party of light nearing supernova prowess, chased almost immediately by the sound of an immense explosion. From somewhere in the thick of the resulting smog, came a dim light.

As the light gathered strength, Shun could vaguely make out the shape of a human; of a girl, with sharp, delicate features. Her dignified yet petite silhouette drew nearer until finally, she landed right next to Shun.

Remaining still on bended knee, Rosalie held out her sword at chest level, never letting her guard down even for a second. The silver light around her right hand and sword seemed to dissipate into the air, shiny particles carried over by the wind.

When it was evident that things had finally quietened down, Rosalie stood up, anchoring the tip of her sword down ever so slightly on the greying asphalt.

Looking up once again into the night sky, she seemed to be checking for any further traces of missing enemies. Watching her, heart beat sounding out loud by his ear, Shun felt moved to the very fibre of his being.

She was gorgeous. Insanely strong, yet with beauty to rival the fairest of maidens any pageant could hope to turn out. Bright as a star, her very presence seemed to snatch all attention and light away from anything else, bringing all eyes to be focused on her and her alone.

Truly, she wasn't called a warrior for nothing. Missiles, fighter jets, they were all no match for her.

Whipping out a spell or a secret technique from her inventory she could completely decimate anything that mankind threw at her.

And it was due to her valiant efforts that the National Assembly Hall, together with everyone inside it, managed to be saved.

Shun felt like hugging her for a good cry.

He really did.

—

Turning to face him, Rosalie's breasts bounced temptingly into sight.

"Shun, are you hurt?"

"W-What?"

Her pupils dilated as she spotted the cut on Shun's arm.

That was entirely his own fault from when he tripped and fell while climbing up the stairs in the railway station.

Not to say that he didn't curse Rosalie for a whole minute after though. After all, it was sort of her fault for going all MIA on him in the first place.

"Let's heal it."

Jolted out of his monologue, Shun felt Rosalie's open palm hovering over his wound. Then, in her clear voice, she sang out the spell word.

"Rhyfeera"

A soothing green light appeared from her palm. Moving her hand over the wound, Shun watched in stunned silence as the skin mended itself and slowly closed up.

Oh my god.

Suddenly, Shun felt giddy with happiness.

He had to be the first person on earth ever to have received treatment from the famous Dragon Bless healing spell.

It felt like nothing he had ever experienced before. The soothing calmness that enveloped his arm felt almost like that of a gentle kiss from a spring breeze.

Finally, when the cut had completely healed, Rosalie released the healing spell.

Running his finger gently across the healed skin, Shun felt something resounding from deep within him. It was but a primary level healing spell, and yet, neither the magnificent walls of flame, nor the pillars of light could ever hope to compete with the deep impression that it had left on Shun's body and mind.

"Have I made you happy, Shun?"

—

There it was, her ever-present phrase.

Lifting up his head, Shun stared at Rosalie. Her innocent beauty was etched into her every feature.

Shun nodded.

"In that case, I'm happy too."

Her face lit up in a rapturous smile.

She's beautiful.

Tips of his ears reddening, somehow, Shun couldn't find it himself to tell her what he thought.



One thing was for sure though.

This girl in front of him – She was Rosalie, the one and only heroine warrior princess from the game Dragon Bless that he had always worshipped.

Any lingering doubts that he had harboured in the recesses of his mind were swept clear by that one incident.

...

His chest constricting with feeling, Shun was about to say something.

“Rosalie, I –”

The blaring sound of sirens cut through the air, signalling the arrival of police cars, fire fighting engines and ambulances galore.

—

“Rosalie, let’s get out of here!”

Sweat beading on his forehead, Shun pulled at Rosalie.

“No.”

Rosalie shook her head.

What a time to be stubborn!

“There’s still that most important task left!”

“Most important –?”

“Yes, the most important task.”

Looking all grim and regal, Rosalie once again raised her hand up towards the sky, and opening her palm she sang out the words of a final spell.

“Ethe!”

A pillar of light descended on the National Assembly Hall, ripping up entirely the top part of the building.

“This should do.”

“W-W-W-What are you do—”

“This should disturb those demons within the assembly hall.”

With her sword held out, Rosalie then took up a fighting stance.

“In truth, I really wanted to use something more powerful, but unfortunately I’ve run out of MP.”

Rosalie’s MP was already at max level as it was. It not being enough was more the fault of Rosalie’s rather low wisdom stat than anything else.

As the bricks tumbled upon each other, Shun could do nothing but watch as the National Assembly Hall was turned into nothing more than a pile of useless rubble.

“L-Let’s run!”

Shun had shifted his grip onto Rosalie’s arm and was already pulling desperately then.

“What?! Why should we run Shun?”

Feet planted firmly to the ground, Rosalie tried to reassure Shun.

“Don’t worry, Shun. Even if I am unable to use my spells, I will definitely defeat the prime minister and –”

“Shut up!”

Turning his back towards the lit road, Shun pulled Rosalie onwards, heading towards the station with all his might.

Deep down, he felt tears start to well up.

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VOLUME 1

Season 1, Episode 10

Episode 10:

By the time he hit senior high, Shun had a pretty clear idea of who his parents were.

Despite having looked up to them as a child, worshipping the ground they walked on, even he was forced to recognize sooner or later that there was something not quite right with his parents.

Still, they were his parents, and he was prepared to accept them for who they were.

That is, until this happened.

When this happened, he found out that his parents didn't just fall under the abnormal category, they were literally crazy.

—

“Ahem! Right. So, starting from today, Rosalie is a part of our family!”

“Awww, our little Shun's all grown up! He's finally got a girlfriend now!”

Grinning, Shun's parents, Takashi and Manami, embraced each other in the before-tango position and threw their head backs.

Maniacal laughter sounded around the room.

“I'm not a girlfriend.”

From where she was sitting at the table, Rosalie chimed in to correct Shun's parents.

“I'm his bride.”

Her tone of voice was perfectly serious.

Then, after making such a shocking statement, Rosalie turned back around to face the mountain of cream puffs on the table and proceeded to block out the rest of the world and stuff her face.

“....”

Amidst the munching and pheromones that Rosalie exuded, Shun felt the thudding in his head grow more pronounced with every passing minute.

A nice, solid painkiller would be good right now.

It seemed that Rosalie and his parents had really hit it off on the way to the National Assembly Hall.

And those cosy little get-to-know each other chats in the train had resulted in the worst, or best, possible arrangement – Rosalie and Shun were to now live together.

Well, that did solve a part of his problems at least. He really was rather worried about the whereabouts of Rosalie's future living quarters.

"Oh my, what a lovey-dovey couple they are!"

"Rosalie dear, we will leave Shun to you from now on!"

Wait, what?!

"Mom, Dad, what are you saying?!"

This was bad. This was embarrassing.

They really could have done without that official handover.

"Why aren't you suspecting her? Not even a little bit?"

"My, Shun, why would we? She is your bride."

"Don't give me that Mom! That's the part where you really should start questioning already."

"Oh Shun, come on. After all, she is so cute!"

Oh god.

If his parents' answers got anymore inane, he would lose all his hair from over-frustrated pulling.

"Didn't she come from a faraway country though?"

—

What?!

"Like, you know, when we were taking her to the National Assembly Hall she told us some stuff about her hometown and all, back in her country."

Mrs. Manami's vague statement only served to confuse her son more.

"And by 'some stuff' you mean...?"

"Oh, you know, just some things about heroes and Demon Kings and some dragon thing and... undead birds?"

"Are you serious— ?!"

"I mean, she is a little strange, but she is such an honest child. And so cute too!"

"Yes, definitely honest and cute."

"Plus, she is your bride."

"Your very own wife!"

This was followed by another bout of crazed laughter.

Shun felt faint.

Oh god, why in the world was he born to such parents?

He didn't think that anyone sane would let Rosalie's story go with just a passing 'she's just a little strange' comment.

"Speaking of which, there was that huge accident at the National Assembly Hall right? Would you have had anything to do with it, Rosalie dear?"

"Oh my Mama, you say such interesting things! Well, how about it Rosalie-chan?"

"..."

Rosalie, it seemed, was still floating in her field of alpine flowers in cream puff dreamland, looking utterly content.

"Oh well."

They'd probably not get an answer anyways.

Seeing that, Shun's parents decided to take the smart way out and switch topics. Or at least that was what it seemed like to Shun, who would have been in major trouble should his parents have decided to pursue the previous conversation thread.

—

"Anyways Papa, where is Rosalie going to be sleeping?"

"They can just sleep together!"

"That's right, Papa! After all, she is his bride!"

Shun was about to nod his head in agreement when the full load of what they said finally hit him.

"Are you guys crazy?! What did you just say?!"

He knew that he would explode someday. He just knew it.

"You can't do that! I mean, you guys should already know that without me telling you. Argh! Can you actually use your brains for once? Come on people, start thinking maturely, like real parents. Leaving aside the problems about her accommodation, it's an even baser problem than that right?"

Shun's righteous outburst left him feeling breathless.

"... Son, could it be that you're against this?"

His father broke the silence with one of his rare comments.

This was proceeded by an enquiry from Shun's mother.

"My dear, do you not want Rosalie staying with us?"

Unbidden, images of Rosalie out on the street, people everywhere gawping at her in awe and barely concealed lewdness flashed in his mind.

It was true. Rosalie did not actually have anywhere else to stay.

Sigh, I guess there's no choice.

...

Why, oh why, did his parents always drive him speechless?

His silence spoke volumes about his consent.

Twin grins found their way to his parents' face.

"Hahaha! What a little tsundere(1) you are!"

"Don't worry, Mama will go with you to apologize to Miko-nee as well!"

"Why are you involving Miko-nee in this too?"

And then –

"Dear me, what a child!"

His parents shrugged their shoulders in unison, while throwing him pitiful glances.

...

They would kill him someday. He'd be the first person in the world to die from over-annoyance.

—

Turning around, Shun's father extended his next question to Rosalie.

"Rosalie, my dear, what about you? Do you have anything that you wish for?"

That seemed to have got through, if only because the creampuffs had all gone (Shun checked). Descending from flowery creampuff dreamland, Rosalie turned to face his parents. Chewing, savouring, and finally, swallowing that last bit of heavenly cream, Rosalie opened her stained mouth to answer him.

"There's only one thing that I want here."

Sitting up gracefully, Rosalie's eyes met with Shun's.

Oh no.

That impending sense of doom that rose in his heart was inevitable.

"As his bride, I wish to be legally married to Shun as soon as possible."

...

If his feelings could be put into motion, Shun would totally be that one guy drowning in the darkness like from those old anime in the eighties.

His parents on the other hand, had quite a different reaction.

His father guffawed loudly.

His mother covered her mouth with her hand while exclaiming.

Both were indicators of extreme happiness.

God, just take me now.

“Well then, we’ll be looking forward to grandchildren soon if that’s the case, Rosalie-chan!”

“Good luck in fulfilling your wifely duties, Rosalie-chan! Want a coffee?”

“Oh look, Shun, she nodded!”

“To the coffee!”

“... Let’s get going, shall we Mama? Wouldn’t want to put a break on Japan’s measures to increase the national birth rate after all.”

“Oh Papa, what a wonderfully sinister way you have of looking at things!”

“Yes indeed. And while we’re at it, why don’t we find ourselves an accommodation too and get on with—”

“Stop it, Papa! We shouldn’t talk about these things that would further traumatize our adolescent son.”

“Shun, before we leave, do you have any questions for us?”

“Yeah, I do – What?!”

“What is this ‘coffee’?”

“Y-You –”

WHHHHHHHHHYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY?!

Shun screamed out in frustration while the voice in his heart echoed in the silence.

—

From somewhere, came the muted muttering of a girl.

“Kanda Shun, huh? For it to be a student from the same school, of all people, to have caused such a mess.”

While her voice contained a note of surprise, her gaze remained cool as she surveyed the damage from afar.

“Coping and processing should take us up till morning, and then later I’ll have to have a chat with that guy when I get to school. Right, so that’s my first all-nighter, planned out.”

And with that, she drew in a deep breathe.

The way she spoke of it, it was as if that incident at the National Assembly Hall, one on a scale which history had never seen or heard of before, was only about as important as her beauty sleep.

Something was up.

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(1) tsundere – Japanese character development in which the subject is initially cold and even hostile towards another person before gradually warming up.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 0

Episode 0:

Kanda Shun had a morning routine.

Every morning, his cousin, Kobato Mikoto would come and wake him up.

Although only a year his senior, Miko-nee had taken on the role of a guardian to Shun. Apparently, the sisterly spirit in Mikoto was triggered when Shun's parents had left to start out their business, and thus, up to the present day, she insisted on taking care of everything for Shun.

That being said though, somehow, whenever she went to wake Shun up in the morning, she would always find some small thing that would drive her mad with worry, and eventually it would all wind up with her lying on the ground, out cold.

One of the more memorable incidents – Mikoto had just barged into Shun's room, and, after having witnessed the so-called phenomenon of “camping in pyjama pants”, which Shun had taken up back then, had subsequently descended into a state apoplectic shock, the predictable conclusion being that Shun woke up to an unconscious Mikoto at the foot of his bed. Her train of thought back then had supposedly started off with “he was going to be late for school”, but ended up with Mikoto's umbrella finale for everything Shun related – “he's going to be a NEET!”

As such, it was always Shun who woke himself up first every day.

Then he would attend to Mikoto.

What? It wasn't his fault.

For the record, he did ask her to stop coming, since it was becoming more of a hassle and less of a help to him, seeing as she fainted on him every morning. But every time he broached the subject, tears would well up in Mikoto's large, doe-like eyes, and she wouldn't stop sobbing until he finally withdrew whatever it was that he said.

—

Another usual morning.

“...Ngh..”

Shun awoke slightly before Mikoto was due.

It was already June, and yet, the sunny weather kept up.

The morning sun was definitely filtering through the window. He could feel it.

Shifting slightly in the bed, Shun found himself wedged between something extremely soft and comfortable.

Or rather, two somethings.

Two somethings that were lightly swollen, smooth as silk, and had a hint of a bounce.

“Shun, do my breasts feel good?”

A voice.

From somewhere above the region of his forehead.

Argh! And just when he was about to drift back into dreamland!

...

Slowly, very slowly, Shun raised his head.

Blonde hair glinting in the morning sun, piercing sapphire eyes, those noble features arranged into an angelic expression.

Rosalie.

She took his breathe away.

“In that case, we can stay like this forever.”

Smiling, Rosalie looked down at Shun.

So beautiful.

He was about to smile back, when –

Wait a minute, if she’s up there, what am I ...?

A feeling of dread settled in the region of his heart.

Looking dead ahead, he was faced with the glorious sight of Rosalie’s boobs.

Crash!

Falling off the bed, Shun scurried backwards, all too eager to put some space between him and Rosalie and those tempting b– things at the moment.

His teeth chattering, Shun gathered up the remnants of his shattered bravery and asked, “W-What are you doing, s-sleeping h-here?”

“I’m sleeping here because I’m your bride.”

Her reply was firm. Confident.

“Your mother, Manami, taught me to do this.”

That idiot!

“It seems that this husband-wife relationship thing is really similar to the relationship one shares with his allies.”

She proceeded to tell a story of how she had shared a bed with four of her comrades one night while on a journey.

This was game logic at its very best.

...

My life is over.

—

With the morning sun pouring down her back, as she gabbled on about relics of her past adventures, Rosalie felt blissfully safe and warm and at home.

Grunting softly, she stretched her arms.

“What?! Why in the world are you naked?!”

Oh.

Apparently, the coverlet of the futon had silently slipped off when she was cracking her arms above her head.

And of course, she wasn't one to wear anything underneath.

Shun immediately averted his eyes.

Rosalie on the other hand, was not the least bit concerned. In fact, she appeared very intrigued by Shun's reaction.

“I heard of this from that thing you call a television. Last night. Apparently, all married couples sleep like this.”

“It's not like that!”

Or rather, it would be, if they were actually married, but in this case...

Cheeks hot with embarrassment, Shun willed himself to forget what he saw.

Really, how hard can it be?

It was just for a few seconds. For those brief seconds, he saw that shimmering cloud of gold hair, that smooth ivory skin, that gentle slope of her breasts —

Argh!

It was no use. In that short span of time, his brain had seen fit to brand the image of a very naked Rosalie into his mind.

Suddenly, the voice of someone humming an annoyingly cheerful song wafted up the stairs. The sound of footsteps grew closer, breaking into Shun's one-sided attempt to wipe clean that image from his mind.

It was Mikoto.

—

“Miko-nee, wait — ”

Too late, Mikoto had already opened the door and stepped into the room.

“La la la! It's your friendly neighbourhood sister!”

Then, Mikoto opened her eyes.

The song died on her lips as she took in the sight of Shun on the ground, with Rosalie, gloriously unashamed in her birthday suit, perching on his bed.

“Shun-chan will end up becoming a NEET!”

And with that, she fainted yet again.

“Would Leifrla be necessary?”

Rosalie got up from the bed, concerned.

She was still undressed.

“Or maybe, it would be better to let her rest for the day. If so, the three of us could sleep together tonight – ”

“Okay, okay, I get it, Rosalie! Just put on some goddamned clothes!”

“By that, do you mean to get ready?”

Oh god.

Just one little heroine from some game, and Shun’s life was already turned upside down.

—

This, my dear friends, marked the beginning of a wonderful, albeit strange, story of the meeting between a boy and a girl, one that surpassed the boundaries between worlds, and held intertwined the fate of the world.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 1

Episode 1:

Another usual morning breakfast in the Kanda household.

“Wasn’t last night just so much fun?”

“It was absolutely enjoyable, was it not, my boy?”

“Hahaha, we definitely have a lot of changes of clothing installed for us early this June, don’t you think, Shun?”

“Go stuff yourselves!”

Really, he had had enough of his parents poking fun at him. Last night was definitely not fun.

While it was nigh impossible for the entire family to sit and eat together for every meal of the day, the one which they all tried their best to observe was breakfast – family bonding and whatnot.

Today though, there was one extra family member sitting at the breakfast table with them.

With her long golden hair and travelling mantle draped across her shoulders, it was no surprise that Rosalie stood out amongst the other occupants of the table.

The fact that she was just sitting there, complacently flipping through wedding pamphlets made that sight all the more surreal.

“Live the Dream – A Fantasy Hotel Wedding”

“Presenting: Your Wedding”

“Solemn ceremonies”

“Expectant mothers, Rejoice”

Cheesy words and phrases like these just seemed to jump out from the pamphlets.

“Let us weave our magic through that silent, blissful moment’, Shun, why would people want to have spells cast upon them during their wedding?”

Rosalie’s brow furrowed in confusion.

“ ... ”

Looking at her, Shun felt another wave of throbbing pain at the back of his head.

Oh god, please don't let this become a morning routine.

"Rosalie, dear, what kind of wedding would you like?"

Another unnecessary question from Shun's very unnecessary mother, Manami, wafted out from the kitchen.

Shun would bet that they were both there to ruin his life.

"The ceremony should be held in the church of a small town."

Rosalie's reply was once again, quick and to the point.

"First, I'd have to exchange letters with Shun, and we'd have a lover's tryst. Then we'd make a decision to elope, and finally, we'd run away into the sunset – "

Rosalie's version of a wedding drew heavily from her experience with that one in-game wedding event.

Time to interrupt before things got any worse.

"Ahem! Mom, when's breakfast? I'm starving."

Fortunately for Shun, Manami really wasn't all that bright.

"Oh my, you are such a romantic, Rosalie!"

On another note though, there was no sound of objection from Mikoto as she had already left for school. Her school was, after all, located much further than Shun's, and as such, she had to set off earlier in order to be on time for class. However, today, before leaving, she glared accusatorily at Shun before leaving, promising him the "Trial of the Sister" when she returned.

What did "Trial of the Sister" even mean anyway?

And then, food arrived at the table and there was no more time to ponder.

—

Today, they partook in a traditional Japanese breakfast.

Gaping at the food before her, Shun could practically feel Rosalie salivating as her eyes alighted upon the neatly arranged dishes produced from Manami's magical hands.

Barely a few seconds later and the stately warrior princess had foregone all semblance of dignity, and with one rice bowl in hand, proceeded to dig in and eat as if there were no tomorrow.

And then —

"Shun."

From the looks of things, Rosalie had just remembered something.

"What?"

Putting down her small bowl of soup in front of Shun, Rosalie spared another lingering glance at it before relinquishing it to finally meet Shun square in the eyes.

"This bowl of soup is my betrothal present for you."

Excuse me?

Clearly, Rosalie had just read about this in one of those goddamned wedding pamphlets.

“Oh, my dear, we humbly accept your present!”

“Well now, all that leaves is the location of the wedding ceremony, hmm?”

There was no doubt that Shun’s parents were extremely thrilled.

“Are you nuts?”

Shun levelled his glare at his madly chuckling parents as if they were some form of extra-terrestrial organism.

A-Anyways, it wasn’t as if Rosalie even really liked him.

She just happened to mistake him for “Shun of the Dragon Spirit”, that’s all.

—

“You are, indeed, quite formidable.”

Rosalie stared at the plate of tamagoyaki piled up before her, looking for all the world as if she were about to take on the high mountains of Takagahara before stretching her hand into the pile and picking up a dozen pieces to stuff into her mouth.

“My dear girl, you really ought to get some new clothes!”

Manami smilingly interrupted Rosalie’s feud with the seemingly unending pile of tamagoyaki.

“That’s a wonderful costume you’re wearing, but as a girl, you really should have more clothing!”

She seemed wonderfully happy talking to Rosalie about that. Maybe she felt as though she’d gained a new daughter or something.

“What kind of clothing would you like, Rosalie?”

“Something with a high defence stat.”

Rosalie’s answer came out strong and unhesitant.

“That, I definitely cannot ever take off. Although, to be more accurate, what I would wish for would be more of an armour, not clothing. The “Eternal Armour” I have equipped right now, which also happens to be a secret treasure of the Dragon tribe, is a perfect example of an armour with extremely high defence stats. To find one that is better than that would be quite difficult – “

“Ro-Rosalie, here, have my tamagoyaki too!”

Shun then proceeded to stuff his roll of tamagoyaki into Rosalie’s mouth, effectively shutting her up for the time being.

He was beginning to find out that it was quite easy to get the hang of controlling and subduing Rosalie. Kind of sad, really.

—

“So does that mean you’re against all that inappropriate exposure that’s so popular amongst the young people nowadays?”

“Oh my, now that’s how a lady should act! A woman’s modesty is her greatest treasure! As expected of our Shun’s bride!”

He gave up.

Those people were beyond saving.

Wordlessly, he lifted his bowl of miso soup to his lips and drank deeply.

Sneaking a glance at Rosalie, he couldn’t help but remember about that “Eternal Armour” that took him ages to win and forge in-game. Rosalie had said that she was equipped with it in real time, but most likely, they were all unable to see it due to the game’s setting, which allowed the armour to be worn by the character, but not seen by the player.

The producer’s probably wanted the gamers to enjoy the visuals.

Who knew it would come in handy in such situations?

—

The television that morning was plastered all over with news regarding yesterday’s terrorist attack.

“It’s amazing! We’ve checked areas of up to two kilometres radius from the National Assembly Hall, and yet, miraculously, not a single person was found dead or injured!”

The news anchor proceeded to cap the report with a summary of how the current half destroyed National Assembly Hall was really just the result of a stray missile colliding into the building at the very end. Then, the news went on to discuss the fates of the apprehended terrorists, as well as the struggles Japan was having with some country or the other.

Phew, safe!

Shun knew from experience that all people would ever take in from the piece just now was that something important had happened, but that was as far as it got.

No one would ever remember the specifics of that night.

“ ... ”

With that relieving, yet strangely awkward thought about the layperson’s attention span, Shun tried to force a closure on yesterday’s incident.

Unfortunately, he was faced with a constant reminder that came in the shape of Rosalie, sitting so peacefully opposite him, all but stuffing herself with hijiki seaweed.

How someone could even eat with all that chaos lying so heavily on their conscience, Shun would never know.

—

“Pooches and Kitties”

Finally, after a straight run of 14 hours, the news regarding yesterday’s terrorist incident came to an end. However, that did not mean that Shun was any happier to see the next programme that was scheduled for airing.

Seriously, didn't those people have anything better to do than parade their pets around on some stupid reality TV?

"Today, we'd like to welcome to the screen, Tarou-kun! Tarou-kun is 2 years old this year. Standing in front of the shop, Tarou-kun greets all his customers with unadulterated affection and adoration."

The scene then zoomed in on a Shiba Inu dog with a warm wet nose and lolling tongue, as it wagged its tail at the camera.

...

The pair of chopsticks beside him had stopped, hung fused in mid-air.

Rosalie had stopped attacking her food.

Uh-oh.

Something was definitely wrong.

Turning around to face her, Shun noticed blood.

Streaming down from her nose.

Rosalie was having her first ever nosebleed.

"Tarou-kun is happiest when he's out taking long walks with his owner!"

The bleeding was not stopping.

"Rosalie, your nose! It's bleeding!"

Reaching for a tissue, he handed it to her before things could get any worse.

"And that's all for today from Tarou-kun! You lucky dog!"

All that blood was going to dye the tissue red.

And through the entire commotion, cheeks aflame and eyes lit with a wild fire of lust, Rosalie sat still as a log, practically glued to that little dog on the television screen.

Strange.

It wasn't as if there were no dogs in "Dragon Bless". Quite the contrary, in fact.

However, not once was there a mention of the fact that the main heroine of the game would get a severe nose bleed whenever she met one.

Oh, how her enemies would have rejoiced!

...

Inside, Shun felt his young heart shatter into pieces.

—

He came down again to the sound of Rosalie and his mother, whispering rather busily in the kitchen.

Shun had gone up to grab a few of those new printouts before heading to school, but it seemed that in those few

short moments, Manami and Rosalie had already planned something devious.

I don't want to know.

Seeing as there was a completely new member of the house present today, the Kanda family knew better than to leave her alone at home right from the get go. As such, Manami decided to take the day off of work in order to keep Rosalie company and to take care of her.

"I'm headed off to school!"

Shun called out, hoping to make a quick dash and escape before –

"Oh, Shun!"

His mother was wearing *that* face again.

She was undoubtedly up to something.

Oh god, what is it this time?

If not for the fact that Rosalie was standing in front of the kitchen stove, wearing an apron and clutching a ladle, Shun really would have just left his mom mid-sentence.

"It's. A. Secret."

His mom grinned at him.

No mistakes this time. She'd already done whatever it was. She always had when she smiled like that.

"Isn't that right, Rosalie-chan?"

Turning to face him, Rosalie nodded in assent.

...

And then suddenly

Cook

Don't cook

Oh, so that's what they were about.

If Rosalie's apron and ladle hadn't already given the game away, it was now dead obvious what they were up to.

After all, whenever Rosalie tried her hand at something she had never done before in-game, for that very first time before conducting said action, a pop-up window would appear in front of Shun, requesting his input.

"You never know, something amazing might actually happen today! Look forward to it and have fun at school, okay?"

Manami threw a look at Rosalie.

Her turn now.

“Anticipate it!”

She pointed her ladle at him as if it were a sword.

However, the ladle was not a sword.

Shun watched as that one unrestrained movement caused it to fly out of her grip at an unbelievable trajectory.

Shit.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 2

Episode 2:

It was a bright, beautiful morning.

A calming breeze played around with that little bit of short summer sleeve, putting a spring into his step even though he was simply heading towards that same old school.

And by same ‘old’ school, Shun was referring to his high school – Shikishima Senior High.

A normal grey slab of concrete with some courts on the left and grounds in the front.

Ah, those were the days when Shikishima High was still just a normal high school.

That is, until the perennial ‘tyrant’ came along.

Now, behind the normal school building stood the most magnificent structure that Shun ever had the misfortune to see.

It was as if someone had tried to marry the quaint, picturesque scenes of Versailles into modern Tokyo – thus ending up with the monstrosity that resembled neither the gilded Taj Mahal, nor the fabled Palace of Versailles. Instead, it became its own unique landmark, marking itself down on maps as the home of the “Celebrity Course”.

That’s right, Shikishima High now had a course that catered especially for the extremely gifted and advanced – the “Celebrity Course”.

And the so-called pioneer of this course? Yes, none other than the tyrant – Reizeiin Nadeshiko.

Hailing from the rich and powerful Reizeiin Business Group, Nadeshiko was practically the ruler of the entire school.

With that seemingly endless mountain of wealth, coupled with a keen intellect, not even the teachers could stand up against her.

As such, the school was hers to run as she saw fit.

Take today, for example. With nothing better to do, Nadeshiko had set up a pavillion at the front gates, and from upon her sumptuous throne, gazed down at the other common students, inspecting their way of dress. A big signboard in front of the gates announced this event, aptly titled “Inspection and Necessary Changes in Uniform, courtesy of your kind Prefect”.

That imperious gaze of hers bore down on every single student that walked through the gate as her ribbons subtly glinted from her twin tails. Legs crossed at the ankles, she looked the picture of beauty and grace, her special celebrity uniform hugging her figure in all the right places.

Beauty, brains, and an honorary member of the Tensei branch of martial arts, all rolled into one.

Such was the queen, Reizeiin Nadeshiko.

Also honoured by the populace with the nickname, Nadeshiko the Tyrant.

“Ohohoho! Do not fret, o’ commoners. Whilst I might be gracing you with my holy presence, you need not worry! Simply display a magnificent show of modesty and hard work, and I shall for sure recognize you.”

A benevolent smile.

Clearly, she expected everyone to live up to her expectations.

As she stepped up from her throne, two girls from beside her rushed up with a basketful of flower petals, while another trailed behind with a silk parasol.

Really, even a goddess wouldn’t have received such treatment.

—

Quaking, the students filed into the front gate. Her gaze seemed to gleam from atop her throne, not missing a single beat, nor a forgotten shoelace on the path.

Those lucky enough to have made it through the inspection looked simultaneously relieved and constipated as they rushed towards the safety of the main entrance.

Shun, being just one of the crowd, clearly wanted nothing to do with Nadeshiko either.

Heaving himself forward, he took his best shot at evading the eagle’s predatory stare – mix and lose himself within the throng of students heading towards the safety net.

Unfortunately though, luck was just not on his side that morning.

The other students were evading him like the plague.

And for good reason.

“You, over there! Turn around, please.”

Oh no.



Oh, yes.

Yes, indeed.

Nadeshiko had just called out to him.

Rising from her cushions, flower petals danced overhead as Nadeshiko made her way down the stairs of the pavilion towards Shun.

Behind her, a few more girls swiftly cleaned up after her.

Shun barely resisted the urge to snicker and butt in with a pun about goddesses and divas, which definitely would have been a bad idea.

“And who might you be? Your aura is filthy, Cambodia.”

Caught in juxtapose, Shun nodded, then corrected her.

“It’s Kanda.”

“Ah, that’s right! Well, whatever.”

Covering her mouth, Nadeshiko let out a small sound of laughter.

Apparently, that was a signal.

Her followers started to fan her.

“...”

Watching warily, Shun let out a sigh of exasperation.

Can she just let me off already?!

As it was, today wasn’t even the first time this happened. Somehow, Nadeshiko loved to parade herself in front of him and stick her nose into his business.

He really was getting sick of it.

“As you can see, today is where we hold sport check of everyone’s uniform in order to maintain the discipline of the school. And of course, as the supreme ruler of this school, it is my duty to ensure that this inspection is successful.

“Yeah, if you’re so great, then how about you take a good long look at yourself! What about what you’re wearing, huh?”

By then, spectators had already gathered, nosing their way into the scene that was about to unfold.

Whispers of ‘how could he say that to her’ and ‘how dare he’ spread like wild fire amongst the crowd.

On his part, Shun didn’t even bat an eye.

He was used to Nadeshiko and her ways.

“Well, that’s because I’m beautiful!”

The truth did not need any garnish.

“Well, yes, the discipline that I speak of here is slightly abridged compared to the written version of the rule, but I assure you, it holds equal, if not more, importance. Yes, I’ve dyed my hair, and yes, my piercing is showing, but as long as it suits me, it is negligible and hence can be overlooked. However, if something looks bad on someone, then that is definitely not allowed in my school. Capiche?”

Dress it up as she might, it all came down to Nadeshiko’s personal feelings.

Now, that’s *so fair*, isn’t it?

—

“Coming back to thee, I shall now assess your clothing.”

Nadeshiko leant forward, the scent of expensive perfume pervading Shun’s senses.

Too – too close!

Shun squirmed in discomfort.

Nadeshiko, on the other hand, clearly had no such qualms as her hard eyes gave Shun the once, no, twice over, from the soles of his shoes, to that strand of hair that stood just slightly out of place at the crown of his head.

Five short beats later, she retreated.

That marked the start of a flowing stream of criticism.

“Your shoes need washing. Wear your belt at the next belt hole, it’s too tight and your pants are crooked as a result. Unbutton one more button at the bottom of your shirt. Wipe off that hint of eye discharge on your right eye. Your fringe should go soon too.”

Seriously, was there nothing about him that was right?

“I’ll let you off today with just a warming, so please do come in tomorrow with all those flaws corrected.”

While curious, the bystanders knew instinctively that it was now time to leave. Soon they’d be in the safety of the common school hallways, far beyond Nadeshiko’s grasp.

Oh, what wouldn’t he give to join them.

Sigh.

“Nadeshiko, why are you always picking on me? Why am I the only one that you have to observe up close, while for the other students you barely move an inch off of your throne?”

“Please do not get the wrong idea.”

Her reply came, cool and snappy.

“The only reason I would descend from my seat is because you have such a thin presence. I am barely able to remember your name and as such need to watch you carefully in order to make sure that you do not escape from my beauty inspection. Such is my duty as the ruler of this school.”

Shun could have sworn that her nose started to grow every time she talked about that.

“Well, you sure let a lot of other students slip past you today, anyways.”

“Please do not lump me in with the rest of you. None of you will be able to understand the detailed width of my field of vision. I can assure you, I’ve checked every single one of them properly before letting them pass.”

Beside her, the servants were obediently doing all the fanning.

Heaving a long sigh, Shun decided to admit defeat.

It really was pointless saying anything to her.

“That’s amazing! But, I have to run, so – “

“Wait.”

Slender fingers caught at his sleeve.

—
“What now?!”

Beads of light seemed to dance before him as Nadeshiko moved her unfettered hand to pat her hair.

“Do you notice anything different about me today?”

“Excuse me?”

“Observing others is the first step towards improving one’s own appearance. Please, do look carefully now.”

Sparing a cursory glance at Nadeshiko, who had all but thrust out her modest chest, Shun decided to go with the most neutral answer.

“Everything’s the same as always, isn’t it?”

The rage that flooded out of Nadeshiko was immediate and imminent.

“Idiot! I’ve changed the ribbons in my hair. This is the first time I’ve ever wore this pair!”

Fingers shaking as they pointed at the aforementioned accessory, Nadeshiko’s veneer of calm had started to crack.

Fortunately though, before Shun could retort with something extremely rude, another something, or rather, someone, caught Nadeshiko’s eye.

“Tanaka Kazuya, Year 2, Class A, please stop.”

She careened towards the boy, leaving the sight of petals and the sound of sweeping in her wake.

Sheesh.

She really must have a thing against him, mustn’t she? What a joke, her not being able to remember his name when she could actually fit the entire profile of every student in the entire school into that oversized brain of hers.

Tanaka Kazuya turned around, pissed.

In every year there was at least one person who seemed to get things all wrong. Tanaka Kazuya’s shirt was a work of art that morning. A tiger, larger than life, roared out from the gold and silver needlework at the back of his shirt. It practically screamed disobedience, and Tanaka Kazuya was undoubtedly using this inspection as a chance to show it off.

“Are you an idiot?”

Nadeshiko threw down the figurative mallet.

“W-What?!”

“I am deducting five marks off because of that shirt. Another one point each will also be deducted for your unsightly face and actions respectively. Coupled with your prior mistake, you have already lost nine marks. One more and you will be a candidate for ‘judgement.’ Now pick up that rag and throw it away, along with your idiosyncrasy, if you please.”

“What the — ?! You bitch! What did you just say?!”

Tanaka Kazuya’s face had coloured and turned into a strange combination of a reddish black hue. His rage

manifested itself in violent shaking.

“Can you not speak more than ten words? That makes you even stupider than a parrot.”

“You bitch – !!”

Before he could finish his sentence though, a fist connected with his face.

—

“That just cost you one hundred points. You have now obtained a total demerit of one hundred and nine points. Hence, I will now serve out the ‘judgement’.”

With practiced grace, punch after punch landed with precision on Tanaka Kazuya’s prone form.

Nadeshiko was already moving much too fast for the human eye to follow.

And then, she was behind him.

Shun could have sworn that he saw white feathers floating as she lifted and straightened her right leg, her skirt fluttering in the breeze, allowing him just that short moment of reprieve into the private world of Nadeshiko’s underwear and crotch.

Hmm, now that’s an interesting choice...

“Tensei School Secret Art: Dance of the Cygnus!”

The slim, clothed foot swung backwards, gathering force before finally landing down upon its victim with a bone crushing impact.

The dance of the swans had come to an end.

Slowly, Nadeshiko replaced her foot on the ground, heels first, spinning gracefully with retarding speed, while waiting for the effects of inertia to die down.

Tanaka Kazuya, on the other hand, wasn’t so fortunate.

The impact of the kick had sent him around the universe, and finally, when the earth had stopped turning upon its head, he landed on the ground.

Thunk.

Ouch. Must have been his skull.

Turning her back on her opponent, Nadeshiko made to leave. Such was how a ruler was meant to be.

With that problem solved, she turned around instead to face Shun.

Uh oh.

—

It was a *very* pregnant pause.

The atmosphere felt charged.

Shun wondered for a second if he could get off scot free after seeing, her, ahem, panties.

Maybe she doesn't know..?

Chancing a glance at Nadeshiko, that thought immediately flew out of the window.

Impossible. She knows everything.

Surprisingly though, Nadeshiko made no sound of reproof.

As she turned around, Shun saw something very strange.

Nadeshiko was smiling.

Was that just a trick of the light, or were her cheeks stained with just a hint of pink?

It was almost as if she was challenging him.

'So you saw it, hmm?'

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 3

Episode 3:

“Hey!”

Having at last, cleared the entrance, Shun’s classmate Uehara Harukichi greeted him upon sight.

“It’s really bad for you, you know? If you continue hanging around real girls like that, I mean.”

Such acidic words, and yet, the perpetrator was such a beautiful being.

Uehara, having had a long-standing relationship with Akihabara [1], was a renowned figurine designer. He was successful, yes indeed, but what stood out most to Shun was, that despite all that, he still looked like but a child.

His hair was ruffled in that cute I-did-not-put-any-effort-into-this way, serving to emphasize his short stature. His smile was roguish and dimpled, giving him the air of a cheeky, endearing little boy (Shun believed that it was called the shota[2]-style)

“Good morning, Haru-chan!”

A group of female third year seniors walked past, calling out a friendly greeting to Uehara in the process.

Uehara growled in annoyance.

“Kyaa! So cute!”

The seniors hugged each other in an exaggerated fashion, hearts practically flooding from their pores, saturating the air. Everything about Uehara was just too cute! He was like a motherless little boy looking for love, appealing to the nurturer in them.

Uehara on the other hand looked nothing short of extremely pissed.

“Shut up! Man, this is why I don’t like real girls. They move by themselves, talk by themselves – just annoys me to no end!”

He then went on muttering something about the end of the world under his breath while turning his back on the parade of real life females. His cute outward appearance, which seemed to be his only saving grace, was in his case both, a blessing and curse.

Sigh.

Sometimes, Shun really wondered why he was friends with such a guy.

—

Placing his shoes in the locker, Shun headed to class with Uehara.

“Hey, have you heard about that terrorist act at the National Assembly Hall yesterday?”

Shun schooled his features into a polite, bland smile. Best to pretend to know nothing here.

“There has been some really interesting things on the internet about it.”

“I see.”

“Well, you know how according to the news, the National Assembly Hall was destroyed by missiles, and the whole fault lay with the newly built fighter jets? Listen to this. Some websites on the net actually claim that the real culprit behind all this was a beam of light that descended from the sky.”

Sucking in his cheeks for effect, he continued.

“In fact, rumour has it that that strange light actually came down twice, which was what destroyed the entire building. Also, you might not believe this, but some people even said that they saw towering spirals of fire rise up from the ground!”

“This is just a bunch of bullshit.”

“Yeah. At first, the part of the light from the sky sounded kind of real to me, especially when quite a few people claimed to have witnessed that. But really, when you add the part about fires and Dragon Bless curses and whatnot, now that just makes everything sound completely dodgy.”

“Definitely stuff of stories.”

Uehara continued his rant.

“Some guy even went on to say that he saw a girl cosplaying as Rosalie at the scene of action. That really takes the cherry! Other people have since taken it one step further and claimed that Rosalie did not simply disappear from Dragon Bless, but instead has appeared in the real world in order to destroy Japan’s National Assembly Hall!”

“...”

His shirt was see-through now, what with the rate he was sweating at.

Play it cool, Shun! Calm down, no one knows about Rosalie, remember?

“Man, your reaction’s slow today! Anything up, Shun? Normally, you’d be the first to react if there was any news about Rosalie.”

“O-Oh no, well, you see – “

“Whatcha talkin’ about?”

Saved by the bell.

Or rather, by a girl.

—

Their conversation was interrupted, just before Uehara could pursue this further.

Turning around in relief, Shun was greeted by a perky pair of cat ears.

“Were you guys talking about games?”

Shun wrenched his gaze away from the ears to look at the girl who was smiling brightly at them – the student council president, Shirogane Sora.

“Ah, well, you see –“

“You know, I’ve started playing games recently too!”

“I see, that’s great...”

She is gorgeous.

Shun might have been her classmate, but that didn’t mean that he was immune to the refined air of grace and beauty that practically enveloped Sora.

In fact, she was the only girl around with that type of allure who had not been enrolled in the Celeb Course.

With Nadeshiko effectively ruling the entire student population, Sora’s title was but a decoration. However, the fact that she was able to hold such a title also meant that she was the only one amongst the populace that Nadeshiko recognized. Or so the rumours said.

Regardless, the fact that she could spur such rumours in itself showed how enchanted the students were with her. So much so that no one even commented on her cat ears.

“Erm....”

Uehara had long since turned away. This was rather common really. He often did that, usually as soon as someone else came into the conversation. The only time he really talked was when he was alone with Shun.

“Oh my!”

Sora exclaimed in distress, her hands flying to her mouth.

“I haven’t bothered you have I? I’m so sorry!”

“Oh no, don’t worry! It was nothing.”

Can’t make my relief too obvious, after all.

Upon hearing this, Sora was all smiles once again.

“Oh, thank God! That’s great!”

With that, they walked down the hallway towards their class, chattering all the way about mindless, trivial things.

—

“Kanda! Kanda!”

Shun heard someone call his name, just as he had placed his bag on the table.

A guy from his class had just called out to him.

“Could you fix my bicycle for me? The tire’s punctured. I’ll collect it later after club.”

“Sure!”

From his pocket, his friend dug out a 200 yen coin for Shun. That was the regular fee Shun charged. Having picked up a skill for fixing bicycles, he accepted requests like this in order to line his pockets for a comfortable school lunch. It would be about four to five times more expensive to get things fixed at a bicycle shop anyways. Shun knew, which was the main reason why the requests kept on coming.

“Make it look like a Ferrari, okay?”

“I’ll paint it bright red for you.”

Shun teased his friend lightly. Opening his bag, he was just about to slip his binder into his desk when he noticed something poking out of the corner of it.

Casually, but placed in a spot where he could definitely find it, was a small folded note.

“I wish to talk to you. Come to the back of the gym after school. This is about Rosalie.”

The words were upright and delicate, the little blue piece of paper undescriptive, leaving no clue as to who had written, or left it for Shun.

Shun looked up, head whipping around the classroom, only to find that everybody was engrossed in their own business.

The chime sounded. Class was about to begin.

[1] Akihabara = a district in Tokyo, Japan, famous for it’s anime and manga-related shops and businesses.

[2] Shota = refers to cute young boys, has connotations which involve attracting girls to young boys.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 4

Episode 4:

Class whizzed by in a blur of colours and sounds. And then, it was lunch.

Shun's mind constantly reflected upon that message.

Someone else out there knew about Rosalie. That message practically screamed at him to take precaution.

But, who could it be?

And how was he to know that they were talking about his Rosalie, who was only the heroine of Dragon Bless, the hottest RPG of all time?

Gasp! Do they perhaps know, why Rosalie came out to our world?

Shun was beyond curious.

Maybe, maybe, maybe, it was someone that was in some way interconnected with Rosalie from that strange world, who had also come out –

Once again, his mind drew a blank.

Sigh. As per usual, whenever he tried to 'imagine' the impossible, his train of thought would come to an abrupt stop.

"You're staring off into space again."

They were headed off to lunch at the cafeteria, Uehara commenting placidly on Shun demeanour, or in this case, misdemeanour.

"Nah, it's nothing."

—

Inconsequential topics littering the hallways, Shun and Uehara soon found themselves in front of the cafeteria.

A large signboard, where normally would have been empty space, stood before them.

"Luncheon – learning the ways of peasant cuisine"

The whole cafeteria had been redecorated, and now resembled something out of a Viennese café catalogue. The situation was made even more unbelievable when Shun spotted girls from the Celeb Course sitting at each designated table, staring dumbfounded at the food in the plastic container before them. In all seriousness, it looked as if none of them had ever seen a donburi or udon dish in their lives.

"Dearest sister, whatever could this agemono[1], whose breeding far exceeds its contents, even be?"

"I believe, Yumi, that these are known to peasants as kakiage."

"But how is it that breeding is the only thing on it?"

Soft, polite exchanges as such could be heard throughout the entire floor. And above this, Nadeshiko presided in all her glory.

That being said, her gaze would occasionally wonder towards the doorway of the cafeteria, as if waiting or searching for someone.

...

Shun didn't care who it was that she was searching for.

No, really, he didn't. As long as he could get off scot free. That was all that mattered to him.

However, he sincerely doubted that that would ever happen. As soon as he poked his head through the door, she would find some way to call him out for sure.

And he was in no mood for any of her little games.

Well, guess there's only one choice left.

"Sorry Uehara, I'll have my lunch later."

"O-Oi!"

Turning his back on Uehara, Shun retraced his footsteps towards the bicycle shed, which was conveniently located at the other end of the school building.

Guess he'd get a start on fixing that bicycle first.

—

Shun fetched his trusty toolbox from a corner in the garage and pulled out his classmate's bicycle.

It was time to get down to business.

Plopping himself down, Shun deftly removed the inner tube of the bicycle tyre. Then, pouring a packet of water onto it, he was able to clearly pinpoint the location of the leak.

Yup, a piece of worn sandpaper and rubber patch would do the trick.

Shun was no novice in this, having picked up the skill for repairing bicycles at an early age when he used to stay with his uncle, who just so happened to own a bicycle shop.

As such, he allowed his attention to wander while never ceasing his task at hand.

Just slightly across the open space from the bicycle shed were a few of the students from the Celeb Course, stationed as guards in front of the Celeb Course school building. They were playing with Tome, a female Pomeranian mix, widely accepted and loved as the school's very own pet.

Shun remembered being told that once upon a time, the land on which the Celeb Course building stood was simply acres of sprawling paddy fields.

Of course, all that became ancient history when Nadeshiko the tyrant entered the school. Upon her arrival, she ordered the fields to be filled up and her Celeb Course building to be built.

Sigh.

Sometimes Shun really did not understand why Nadeshiko would go so far as to enroll in a school just to build a special building all for herself.

To make matters worse, normal students weren't even allowed into the Celeb Course school building. Only students from the Celeb Course could enter freely, while the remaining population of students had absolutely no contact whatsoever with the Celeb Course building.

It was as if the Celeb Course was an entirely different entity, separate from the rest of the school. Why they even bothered to place it under the same school banner was a mystery entirely beyond Shun's capacity of reason.

—?

Lost in his musings, Shun failed to notice another presence in the bicycle shed until a shadow fell across the tyre.

Turning around, Shun came face to face with his worst nightmare.

Nadeshiko was standing at the entrance to the shed, staring at him in silence.

Strangely enough, she didn't have her whole entourage with her.

Upon spotting Shun at the dim corner, Nadeshiko started, and then, placing her hands on her hips gave a very delicate, holier-than-thou snicker.

"You'd work so hard for a mere ¥ 200 worth of pocket money?"

"...How'd you know about that?"

An exaggerated sigh.

"When you're sitting in as mighty a position as I, nothing goes unnoticed. Even trivial things as such."

"I see."

With no interest in continuing the conversation, Shun turned back to his work. Fixing the patch on exactly the right spot on the inner tube, he brought out a small hammer and began hammering the patch in rhythmically. When that was completed, Shun produced another packet of water and poured it onto the inner tube in order to test the secureness of the patch.

Throughout this, Nadeshiko watched Shun intently.

"What is it?"

"N-Nothing. I was just thinking, what paltry food you must survive on every day if this was all you had for your lunch money. Oh, and also, in case you were wondering, I'm just here for a walk. My girls from the Celeb Course took a shock today from the food in your cafeteria, and thus I decided it would be best for me to refrain from eating it. That being said, today's luncheon was mainly for them to experience the peasant's lunch for themselves, and I must agree that —"

Shun decided to cut her short before she talked his ears off.

"I see."

It was time to pack up and go.

“Please wait!”

A hand tugged at his sleeve.

“Since you insist upon it, I guess it would be alright for you to join us in the Celeb Course building cafeteria for lunch just this once.”

...

“Excuse me?”

Blushing slightly, Nadeshiko turned away from him as she proceeded to supply an explanation.

“D-Do not misunderstand! This is just a coincidence. I am doing this for charity. All for charity. To better the world! Your pitiful countenance has moved my heart and I have decided to show you some mercy by letting you have a taste of something you otherwise would never be able to obtain after a lifetime of hard work. Do you know that even young heirs of the world’s largest conglomerates would find it difficult to be graced by my presence? Do you understand how amazing that is? Do you even know how fortunate you are?”

“... Thanks, but no thanks.”

“The food will be prepared by chefs personally handpicked and trained by Michelin-three-star-rated chef Michel Troisgros. As such, only food of the highest quality will be served for our lunch.”

Strange. Someone’s persistent.

But still, there was no way he would consent to have lunch with her. He’d much rather starve.

Then, just as he was about to change the topic and cut loose –

“Shun!”

Hmm... That sure sounds familiar.

Oh no. She couldn’t be –

Rounding the corner, her hands raised in greeting, was Rosalie.

Oh God.

Shit was about to get serious.

—

“Is she your friend?”

“U-Um...”

This was bad. Real bad. He’d better get her out of here before the rest find out, or else –

As Rosalie walked towards him he heard, from afar the sound of thundering footsteps.

It seems as though the whole student population had followed Rosalie out here.

Oh no. No. No. No. No. No.

“So this is where you were hiding, Shun.”

Those piercing stares from behind were catching up, perforating Shun, sinking deep into his skin.

“Why’re you here?”

The first question that popped out of his mouth.

“Manami sent me here. I talked to various people in order to find out where you were.”

...

Why was it that she never understood what he meant?!

“No, not that, I mean – “

He was interrupted by his classmates, who clearly were unable to suppress their curiosity any longer.

“Hey, Kanda, my friend, who’s this kid?”

“She from abroad? I totally dig! She’s so cute! And that cosplay!”

“That’s the one, ain’t it? The one from Dragon Bless – “

“... The Warrior Princess Rosalie.”

No, not you too, Uehara.

“She’s really into it, huh? Looks exactly like the real Rosalie!”

“...? What are you saying? I am the real Rosalie!”

Oh no, gotta stop her now!

“Uwah –!!”

Caught like a deer in the headlights, Shun did the next best thing.

Slamming a hand on her mouth, he succeeded in effectively shutting her up.

Although, come to think of it, that may not have been the best idea. He could tell from the confused stares that his classmates, especially Uehara and Nadeshiko, had no idea what had gotten into him.

Someone decided to speak up.

“What’s wrong, man?!”

A pregnant pause. Sweat beaded on Shun’s forehead. The tension in the air was so thick that scissors could cut through it.

This was a very dangerous situation. Like walking on a tightrope, with thumbtacks attached.

“Haha – So, Rosa– no wait, so, why’re you here?”

You know what they say – when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

First, change topics and distract the crowd.

Rosalie, however, remained unfazed. With a smile and nod, as though she had been waiting for this very question, she held out her hands towards Shun.

There, clutched tightly by the knot on the top was a bento box, wrapped in the traditional Japanese style.

“I made a bento for you.”

The pride from said accomplishment was all but written on her face.

“I made this for you”

...

Dead silence. Whispers died down as Shun remembered a scene from the morning.

“Something wonderful is going to happen today, so just look forward to it, okay, Shun?”

Argh!

That Manami –

How could he have been so stupid? He knew that she was going to try her hand at cooking, but he never would have expected her to show up here, and like this, of all places –

He'd give anything to be able to hand Manami a good shaking right about now.

And what was more, it seemed that Manami had taught Rosalie some very interesting new words to say to him when handing him the bento.

“How do you feel Shun? Have you fallen heads over heels in love with me yet?”

A slight blush dusted her cheeks. ‘Heads over heels’, such an expired phrase could only have been Manami’s doing.

Around him, the crowd started to stir. Girls were cheering loudly as they watched the scene unfold while the boys were predictably jeering at him, probably envious that such a beautiful specimen as Rosalie could ever fall in love with someone like him.

“N-No! Wait!”

By that point though, no one was even listening to Shun.

“Do you think she’s handing him a homemade bento crammed full of love?”

“So, does that means they’re lovers?”

“–We’re not lovers.”

Rosalie intervened, firmly denying the statement.

Shun had a horrible feeling of *déjà vu*.

Gotta stop her, gotta stop her, gotta stop her – !!!

“We are betrothed. I am Shun’s bride.”

Too late.

Seemingly unaware of the damage dealt, Rosalie continued.

“In other words, yes, how would you put it? I think the right term should be ‘Bento Made By A Loving Wife’.”

The finishing blow.

Everyone held their breaths. The bicycle shed had become a vacuum.

Stiff and unmoving, his classmates stood, watching him and Rosalie.

It was the calm before the storm.

And then, all hell broke loose. Shun didn't even know how to contain it.

—

“Only the students of this school are allowed in here. This has been an iron-clad rule in our school, enforced for generations. Please leave.”

A voice broke through the surrounding chaos.

Nadeshiko, calm and cold as ever, stalked fiercely towards Rosalie. Shards of ice seemed to glitter around her as she prepared for a faceoff with Rosalie.

Shun had never seen the tyrant as displeased before.

“I have no idea who you are, but as you have stepped foot into this land you shall hereby be judged in accordance with our rules. In other words, my rules. I shall deal out the punishment as I see fit.”

Nadeshiko raised her right leg, heading into battle position.

“This is your punishment!”

With movements quicker than the speed of light, Nadeshiko howled out a battle cry as she angled her kick towards Rosalie's face.

Shun closed his eyes, preparing for the resounding slap of foot-face contact.

...

It never came.

Moments later, he opened his eyes to a magnificent scene.

Rosalie had caught hold of Nadeshiko's leg in a death grip, her movements fluid and easy as though she was simply dusting off her shoulder.

Nadeshiko looked deranged in all her rage.

His classmates were all wearing similar expressions of shock and amazement.

No one had ever stopped the tyrant's kick before. No one.

Ever the cautious fighter, Nadeshiko immediately withdrew her foot, returning back to her neutral stance.

She was glaring openly at Rosalie now, her fighting spirit practically pouring out of every pore in her body.

...

Rosalie, on the other hand, had already taken her eyes off of Nadeshiko.

Something else had happened along to grab her attention.

Tome, the dog, had come strolling in.

Her dear pink tongue lolling out of her mouth, Tome walked over, her large round eyes staring pleadingly towards Rosalie – as if asking her to stop the fight and play together nicely with everyone.

Such a kind little animal. She probably saw the fight from where she stood, playing with the guards in front of the Celeb Course school building. Being the homely, happy, peaceful animal that she was, she then came ambling over to stand by Rosalie, in order to stop the fight.

Rosalie, eyes bright with unshed tears, stood trembling before Tome.

And then.

Blood. So much blood, came gushing out from her nose.

—

“Kyaaaaaa—!!!”

Nadeshiko unleashed a horrified scream, blood splattering all over her immaculate outfit.

Everyone was thrown for a loop at this sudden bloodbath.

Tome, being at the center of the fray, was particularly terrified. Letting out a howl, she ran as fast as her feet could carry her, away from the bleeding Rosalie.

“Come here little girl, come here!”

Rosalie, so enamored by the sight of the little dog, either did not notice she was bleeding, or didn’t care. She chased after Tome, clearly unwilling to let the little dog out of her sight.

She was a fast runner too.

No wonder Tome was scared shitless.

“T-This is so... humiliating!”

Having regained enough sense to string a sentence together, Nadeshiko tried to salvage her pride.

“I challenge you! Let us have a competition to see who the best is.”

Unfortunately though, Rosalie only had eyes and ears for Tome.

Running around in circles, she chased, hot at her heels, determined to catch her.

Shun really had to hand it to the little dog for not having given in yet.

Nadeshiko groaned in exasperation, and glancing over at Shun, steeled herself for a final shot.

“We will start as soon as the ring has been set up. I swear that I will clear my name and regain my pride before the eyes of everyone in this school.”

And with that, her head held high, Nadeshiko stalked away.

—

“With the way things are going, afternoon lessons are going to be cancelled, don’t you think?”

Shun nearly jumped out of his skin when out of nowhere a soft voice whispered beside his ear.

Reflexively spinning around, Shun was greeted by a pair of cat ears.

It was the student council president, Sora, her grinning face pushed close to his own.

When did she —?

“Kanda-san, would you please come with me for a minute? There is something I wish to talk to you about.”

“Something you want to talk to me about?”

Sora nodded her head politely. Then, in a casual undertone, she added, “It is ‘after school’ right now, isn’t it?”

What was she talking about?

Wait a second... That sounds familiar...

It couldn’t be —

“Oh, in case you were wondering. Yes, this is indeed about Rosalie-san.”

A small smile played on Sora’s lips.

[1] Agemono – a category of deep fried dishes in Japanese cuisine.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 5

Episode 5:

“Were you the one behind that note, President?”

It was as good of a time as any. After all, there was no one there behind the gym that afternoon.

“Nope! Sora did not do that!”

Shun watched as Sora vehemently denied his query, the cat ears perched atop her head bobbing with every shake.

Seriously, he did not understand this girl.

“Although, Sora will just pop off for a bit and get the person who did call for you, okay?”

With that, she disappeared behind a corner of the gym.

Only to reappear seconds later.

If Shun had expected something to change, then clearly his expectations had been betrayed.

She looked exactly the same. Except, without the cat ears.

“Nice to meet you. I’m an investigator from the Dimension Management Association.”

“...?”

His confusion threatened to overwhelm him.

—

“President —?”

“No, I am not your President. I am an investigator from the Dimension Management Association.”

She smiled, correcting him before he could even finish.

“But —“

“I am an investigator from the Dimension Management Association.”

Seriously, that smile of hers was starting to seem creepy.

That, coupled with her insistence, was going to get them nowhere. If he wanted some answers, he was going to have to take a different approach.

“Erm... Sorry, but did you say Dimension Management Association?”

“Yes indeed. I’m afraid that I can’t go into much detail, but that being said there is something that we, from the Dimension Management Association, wish for you to know.”

Leaning forward, Sora (albeit without her cat ears) gestured for Shun to come closer. Her next words were only meant for his ears.

“This place isn’t the only dimension that exists.”

...

—

What?

An explosion of epic proportions set off in Shun’s brain. The confusion etched on his face prompted Sora to continue with her explanation.

“This place that you humans call Earth falls into the IV+ category of dimensions. Of course, there are also the various other dimensions that exist, from all the different categories and of varying shapes and sizes. This is where we come in. The Dimension Management Association divides and manages all the different dimensions, with agents residing in each of the dimensions to oversee it. Thus, I just happen to be the agent for this one.”

Shun didn’t know which part of her story to believe.

But pseudo-Sora was not done yet.

“Recently, we’ve managed to discover yet another type of dimension, one which we call type VI, which consists of all the different game dimensions, “video games” as you humans call them. When Rosalie-san appeared from within ‘Dragon Bless’, she became the first person in history to ever have broken down the lines between the dimensions and exist independently in an entirely separate dimension than her own —“

“W-wait a minute!”

No more. He needed her to stop before he got even more confused.

“There’s really no point in you telling me all about dimensions IV and VI and whatnot. I don’t even understand what you are saying.”

...

Sora shook her head, clearly disappointed in Shun’s ability of comprehension.

“Well, in other words, there are a lot of different dimensions that exist in this universe. Aside from this one, of course.”

Her enunciation was clear, patient and unhurried. She then gestured towards her surroundings as though trying to make sense of her words through her actions, similar to what one might do for a small child.

“As such, it is from one of these different dimensions, also known as the “dimension of games”, that Rosalie came from. Do you understand me now?”

A slight nod.

“Yeah.”

Well, somewhat, at least.

The construction of the ring in the middle of the school ground was making quite a din.

Shun couldn't bring himself to care anymore. Not about the noise that was giving him a headache, nor about the mystery that Sora posed. Heck, he doubted that he even cared about the fact that Rosalie had just appeared right in front of him from the depths of an RPG game.

All he wanted was for someone to tell him what in the world was actually happening.

That, or they could just wake him up from this nightmare. Whichever came first.

Just then, Sora reached into her breast pocket and produced a little something that Shun was very familiar with.

It was the RPG game "Dragon Bless".

Holding it out towards him, she said with an air of finality, "And this, is the game dimension."

—

"By that, do you mean the setting in which the game takes place in —?"

Pseudo-Sora cut him off.

Either she was getting impatient. Or she didn't want Shun getting the wrong idea.

"More like, each game is its own living dimension. It has space, matter, binding laws, and locality. In fact, Dragon Bless can be said to be a one of the few worlds that show an amazing likeness to a type IV+ dimension. Therefore, each individual game that is sold in stores has their own self-contained Dragon Bless game dimension, all of which are the one, yet can exist as separate entities of the same dimension."

Shun stared, long and hard at the game in pseudo-Sora's hands.

This was supposed to be a dimension..?

"Sales of the RPG game Dragon Bless reached up to 50 million worldwide. Therefore, you could say that there exist 50 million different lines for the Dragon Bless dimension, with Rosalie existing simultaneously as a "possibility" in each of these lines. However, now that she has materialized into this dimension she has become a very real presence, and thus can only exist as a single entity."

" ... "

Something clicked into place at the back of Shun's mind. Was that the reason Rosalie disappeared from all the other Dragon Bless games that morning?"

Still though, he barely understood half of what was being said.

Heck, his common sense was still at least a mile behind, trying to catch up with her explanation.

What dimensions? What world lines?

Such words were, in Shun's experience, only uttered by smitten, pathetic characters in manga or sappy games.

He hadn't bailed on Sora yet, but it was by no means an easy task for him to swallow what was being said.

That, and the one big question lingering at the back of his mind that had yet to be answered.

“Why is she here?”

Forget being tactful. He wanted answers right there and then.

Pseudo-Sora’s smile grew wider.

“That’s because of your power, Shun.”

—

“After much analysis and research, we’ve managed to determine that this Rosalie is based upon your Dragon Bless dimension line and player data. In other words, you are the culprit behind the ‘dimensional breakdown’.”

Which meant that he —

“Yes, you’ve conducted spatial summoning.”

“Spatial summoning...?”

“Well, that’s what we’ll call it in the mean time anyway. What it means to you is that your imagination basically became reality.”

“... ”

“Though, if you ask me, it’s more like ‘shifting’, whereby an individual from dimension type VI drifts over to materialize in dimension type IV+. Really worth looking into —“

But Shun was no longer listening.

That was impossible.

Him having that power was just —

“I don’t believe it.”

The words tumbled out of his mouth before he could stop himself. Never before had he been more sure of anything in the world. He’d never been able to imagine, since he was born, and he knew that that was not going to change.

“You don’t believe it?”

Pseudo-Sora remained smiling. But her smile was one so wide that even Shun had trouble believing it.

“What you’ve just caused is something that has never been done before, and yet you don’t believe me even when I tell you about it? Me, who after cleaning up and answering questions thrown at me from every conceivable level of authority out there still had to pull an all-nighter to write a report explaining the situation to the higher ups?”

Her voice rose higher as she continued her tirade.

“I’ll have you know that never in my life have I ever had less than 8 hours of sleep for the sake of my health and complexion. I’ve kept up this record for almost 20 years now and then what should happen but you? For the first time, I had to work after hours, and you still refuse to believe me?”

An ominous, repressive aura had started to flare around her.

“S-Sorry.”

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. He didn’t even want to think of what was going to happen to him should he insist on his stand.

“As long as you understand.”

With a nod of her head, the anger around her dissipated.

“I’ve heard about your condition Kanda-san. Please rest assured that we will be looking into your situation in more depth.”

“...”

It was bad enough to know that he was the first person in the history of the world, or universe in this case, to have managed something of this magnitude. What made it worse was that not even the experts had anything to offer to him in terms of explanation or advise on how to fix it.

Even though pseudo-Sora had given him her professional opinion on his exceptionally strong imagination, he was still struggling to believe it. After all, if that was the case, why was he unable to do so until today –

“Just a warning though, Kanda-san, you might have used up your entire life’s worth of imaginary power with this one time!”

Oooh, that was merciless. Maybe she still bore a grudge at him for forcing her to forfeit her beauty sleep?

“And that, I think, is the end of my explanation.”

The din from the construction ground had started to die down.

Hmm... The ring was probably completed then.

Time to get going. He’d better check on Rosalie too, just in case –

“Please wait a moment, Kanda-san. Before you leave, there is a favor we wish to ask of you.”

Uh-oh. This doesn’t sound good.

“Please marry Rosalie-san.”

—

Damn it! He really should have left when he could.

“What? Why should I marry her?”

His mind started to spin in circles. This was suspect.

“Manami, right...?”

He knew this something about this smelt fishy. When he got him, he would so –

“Why ever did you bring up your mother’s name? We’re talking about your Rosalie-san here, not your mother.”

Oh. So it wasn’t her.

“B-But –!”

“Rosalie-san has become a dangerous contradiction in the fabric of this dimension.”

Pseudo-Sora interrupted him mid-sentence.

“While there are some similarities between this dimension and that from the game Dragon Bless, I’m sure that even you are able to tell that there are some very different key features between the two. The essential laws that makeup these dimensions are just so very different. However, once Rosalie came into this world, both dimensions have started to clash.”

“Clash?”

“Yes. This world will be thrown into chaos.”

That didn’t sound good.

“*Sigh*. Basically, you know that different sports, such as baseball and soccer, have different rules and regulations that the players must follow, right? Do you think that both these rules are able to exist simultaneously in a single game? No, of course they can’t. The same situation applies to the logic behind the dimensions. If two dimensions were to share the same field, they would undoubtedly clash. In fact, I’d be thanking my lucky stars if the only thing that happened were the destabilization of both these dimensions. Although, chances are, both dimensions would be destroyed in the end. That’s why, Rosalie-san’s sudden appearance has caused an intergalactic upset.”

As she delivered her monologue, pseudo-Sora remained smiling.

It was getting kind of creepy.

“The only thing that’s stopping all of that from happening, Kanda-san, is your power of spatial summoning. Somehow, through your power, you’ve managed to integrate Rosalie-san into this world. In other words, what you’ve done is similar to having magically added the rules of baseball into the rules of soccer, without causing a clash between both rules.”

That didn’t sound too bad. Maybe, if he gave these people more time, they could –

“But –“

Arggh. He knew things could not have been that simple.

“– The current situation is so unstable that it wouldn’t be surprising if the precarious balance came toppling down the very next second. Thus, we have deduced that the relationship between you and Rosalie-san will likely be the key to keeping things in check.”

“My relationship with Rosalie...?”

“Yes. Bearing in mind that the start of this strange phenomenon was the power of your imagination, it’s only logical that the ‘relationship’ between the both of you is of the utmost importance in this incident. You both should strive to have strong ties both mentally and physically. In other words...”

Clasping her hands together, romance shining in her eyes, pseudo-Sora looked just like them little old ladies playing matchmaker.

“Please get married!”

Not again.

“When exactly did things start to go down that way?”

“It’s the best way from preventing this dimension from crumbling! And I get to keep my job!”

Her assertive tone brooked no argument.

“I won’t ask it from you right now, but it may be a good idea to start as lovers first. After all, you like Rosalie-san don’t you? Seeing as you’ve actually broken down the spatial fabric of an entire dimension to do so.”

At her accusation, Shun could feel his face grow hot. Why, oh why did she have to confront him about this?

“T-That stuff’s purely your own deduction! And anyway, why do I have to marry her, or even go out with her, for that matter? Rosalie’s a game character –“

“Not anymore.”

A pregnant pause filled the air. Tension, taut as a tightrope hung unspoken between them.

“Rosalie can never return to Dragon Bless. She has now become a unique identity in this world.”

The weight of her words fell on Shun like a ton of bricks. His goosebumps were raised, either from the cold, or fear, he didn’t know.

“Rosalie is now a part of Dimension type IV+, no. 789105334, what you would call Earth.”

That chain of numbers made absolutely no sense whatsoever to Shun. But at this point, it really didn’t matter, did it?

Pseudo-Sora lifted a finger gracefully, and pointed it at Shun.

“You’re the only one. The only one who can sustain both Rosalie and this world. You have it in you to protect them both. All you need to do is to deepen the bonds between you and Rosalie, and help support into this new world that she has been born in.”

“But I –“

“After all, you were the one who caused this mess in the first place, right?”

His denial was just hanging by a thread.

Damn her!

He wanted to deny it, really he did, but how could one deny the truth?

Pseudo-Sora took Shun’s silence as consent and continued with her tirade.

“That idiotic power of yours broke through the barriers between the dimensions and has thus put us into this situation. It is all your fault, isn’t it, Kanda-san?”

Her smile was so forceful now that even Shun recognized it as the façade that it was.

“Therefore, Kanda-san, could I please request for you to man up and take responsibility for the trouble that you have caused?”

“R-Responsibility..?”

“Yes. Please marry Rosalie-san!”

Her light tone wasn't fooling anyone. Shun could tell that if he disagreed with her again his life would be the least of his worries.

Gulping hard, he nodded.

Finally satisfied, Pseudo-Sora turned around, donned on her cat ears and said, "I am now the student council president, Shirogane Sora."

Then, she stalked away into the darkness of the corridor.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 6

Episode 6:

Everyone was talking about them.

Shun could literally feel the gazes of his fellow students penetrating through him as he walked through the hallways.

Guess it didn't take them all that long to spread around word about Rosalie. After all, not everyone could have stopped Nadeshiko's mid-kick as easily Rosalie had.

Nadeshiko was clearly quite pissed about it too, seeing as she actually ordered a censor of said topic.

Not that it worked, but still.

A small voice suggested that perhaps Nadeshiko was more bothered by the fact that Rosalie declared herself as Shun's bride. Shun quashed it immediately. That was just stupid.

Getting up, Shun decided to go hunt out Rosalie. After all, things weren't getting any more comfortable from where he was sitting.

First, he thought he'd try the participant's room that had been set up for the fight later. Stepping into the empty classroom that had been set aside solely for Rosalie, he spotted her beyond the glass divide, slumbering peacefully in a pool of golden sunshine, her body perched at the edge of her seat as her head was laid down upon the table.

Trying to make as little noise as he possibly could, Shun entered the room.

Seeing as there was no one else, Shun decided to grab that one chance he had to watch Rosalie sleep.

...

She really was such a beauty. Her golden hair fanning out on the table, cheeks flushed from the heat, chest steadily rising and falling. She looked a picture of sweet innocence.

Whilst admiring the picture she made, Shun felt the unreality of the situation hit him like a freight train. Maybe it was more apparent after the talk with Sora but Shun felt as though he were this close to witnessing a miracle.

—

It was then that Rosalie woke up.

She smiled a lazy smile up at Shun and got up.

"I've been waiting for you."

Grabbing his hand, she led him to the table.

“Here! Let’s eat your bento!”

Bringing out the bento box, she proceeded to unwrap it with the utmost care, before setting it in front of Shun with a smile.

“I now present you your bento, made with love!”

Shun’s heart skipped a beat.

While it remained true that Rosalie’s sudden turn up had caused quite an upset, and what’s more, her undeniably being the main cause of all this fuss, at that very moment Shun felt quite touched. After all, it wasn’t every day that a girl made bento just for you. Especially not this girl – the warrior princess Rosalie.

“Thanks, Rosalie.”

Determined to savor every morsel of food in the bento, Shun lifted the lid, only to be greeted with a lump of black slime.

His subconscious wrote a little requiem for that fleeting moment of tingly warmth when Rosalie gifted him with the bento.

Really, the stuff in there looked like it could kill. It was as if Slime monsters had been roasted alive with the Begourda spell, the highest grade, most refined version of the Begoura fire magic.

“Go on, have a bite, Shun.”

The black stuff seemed to absorb all forms of light, and emit a killer aura. In fact, Shun wouldn’t even be surprised if it turned out to be able to shoot lasers from within its murky depths.

And he was expected to eat this?!

...

Sneaking a glance at Rosalie, Shun was about to apologize when his gaze met hers.

Her huge eyes were sparkling with excitement, her features akin to that of a child’s who had just completed their first portrait.

There was no way he could say no to that.

And hey, maybe it didn’t taste as bad as it looked.

“T-Thanks for the f-food...”

Shun held his breathe and shoved the first spoonful of slime into his mouth.



...

*This tastes like s***!*

He hadn't even swallowed it, and yet dramatic UFO-capture background music was already playing at the back of his mind.

Grabbing his courage by the tail, he relaxed his throat and allowed that black slime to slide down his gut.

The mental image of a scarecrow falling face down into the earth.

The deafening sound of roaring thunder as it pelts of rain shot down from the skies above. An organ was playing its last few dramatic notes, and both the Devil and Angel were preparing for a battle that was soon to embroil the entire nation. A few habanero peppers were also added into Shun's imagery for extra spice.

"How was it, Shun?"

Rosalie's voice shook him awake from his reverie.

It's bad enough to make my soul dissipate as soon as I open my mouth.

Right, he was definitely going to say that, no matter what happened to her after. She was practically feeding him poison, for crying out loud!

"T-That was horri-cious!"

"Shun?!"

"Sorry, wait! No, I meant that it was delicious! E-extremely delicious!"

"Does that mean it's powerful?"

"A-Ah, yes!"

"That's great!"

She flashed her million watt smile.

"Did I make you happy, Shun?"

...

That was her line from Dragon Bless again. Rosalie tended to say that after helping out any character in the game.

Shun couldn't help but smile weakly at the sheer naivety of it.

Well, figures he was suckers for girls with a kind heart.

—

"Shun, could you read this letter next?"

Well, well, yet another surprise.

Rosalie withdrew an envelope from the drawer beneath the table.

"A letter? For me?"

"We're exchanging letters, are we not?"

Rosalie said this as though it were the most obvious thing in the world.

"This is our first trial in order to achieve marriage. Shun, please read the letter regarding my feelings for you."

...

"Okay."

What else could he say?

Reaching out for the envelope, Shun could feel the residual warmth of Rosalie's fingers on the top of it. Despite his misgivings, he could feel his heartbeat quicken as he broke the seal and took out the note.

Shun is powerful. Very powerful. As powerful as cream puffs. Shun is the star. Manami told me to write that. However, I think that Shun is just Shun. Shun is not a star.

...

That was it?!

Shun's hand shook with an effort to choke back his laughter. Better not say anything lest he injure Rosalie's frail pride.

Well, it was no wonder that her intelligence stats only amounted to 40 points.

"How's the letter, Shun?"

She actually thinks that that's a letter?!

"... Err, yeah, it was great!"

"I see."

She must have been waiting for his answer with baited breathe, for as soon as he gave his appraisal, she let out a huge sigh of relief.

Her talkative side decided to come out and play.

"Hey, Shun. Somehow, I've always felt as though I've been travelling with you all the time. All my adventures and everything, it really feels as though you were right there beside me all the while."

"Huh?"

Narrowing her eyes to look at Shun, Rosalie went on to explain it.

"I've felt you beside me when I journeyed through my world, both during the bad and the good times. In fact, somehow, you were always unbelievably close to me, even if I couldn't see you. You and me, we're connected by fate. Perhaps, you were even there since I was born."

In a fluid motion, she lifted her hand and placed it over her heart.

"That's why, I feel that I was meant to marry you. This is our fate, yours and mine."

She said it so naturally, Shun almost believed her.

...

No, there was no way. Rosalie had mistaken him for the Dragon Spirit, and thus, had felt that it was her destiny to marry him to obtain a certain power. She wasn't saying all of that because she liked him or anything. Of course not. But still –

All that Rosalie had said about journeying together through the lands and whatnot, clearly meant that she was referring to him as Shun, the player of the popular RPG, Dragon Bless. And it was to this Shun that had shared her adventures with her whom she wanted to get married to. She didn't want to marry Shun, the Dragon Spirit.

Outside, groups of students were moving out to the grounds. The competition was due to start soon.

Silence reigned as the school building emptied. The sunlight that shone in through the window cast a shadow upon the mattress in the corner of the room.

Shun could see the dust particles dancing in the breeze. They seemed to circle around Rosalie, enveloping her in ethereal beauty.

He needed to tell her now, before he forgot.

"Rosalie, I – "

Knock, knock!

–

One of Nadeshiko's lackeys entered the room and announced that it was time for the battle.

"Sorry, what were you about to say, Shun?"

The moment had been completely ruined.

"Nothing."

The both of them then proceeded to walk down the hallway to the school grounds.

"Say, Shun, why must I fight this Nadeshiko?"

Shun nearly banged his head against the wall. Did she not even know the most basic reason behind all the fuss?

"Well, you injured her and gave her a nosebleed."

"I see. So I must needs battle her and win before I am forgiven?"

Honestly, Shun didn't even think that Nadeshiko intended to lose. But he couldn't tell Rosalie that, she'd never understand.

Speaking of which though...

"Rosalie, there's something I'd like you to promise me. It's about the battle."

Best to tackle the problem before he forgot.

“Can you promise me not to use any of your spells or special skills during the battle?”

“Why not?”

Because I don't want people to find out that you're a level 99 warrior from Dragon Bless.

—

“You can't let Rosalie-san find out that this is another dimension.”

Sora's warning sounded like alarm bells in his head.

“She must not know that this wasn't the dimension that she occupied previously. Rosalie's existence here is still very shaky, and should she find out about this, the very fabric of her being might crumble and she would cause an explosion of sorts in this dimension. Therefore, I implore you, try not to let Rosalie suspect anything out of the ordinary here.”

—

Remembering Sora's words, Shun knew that he needed to keep the crowd quiet somehow.

He didn't want his world to crumble after all. That and it would make things much less of a hassle.

Rosalie, on her part, was looking at him expectantly.

He needed a cover.

“Well, whatever the reason, just please promise me you won't use magic?”

Rosalie cocked her head, and looked at Shun curiously.

“Are you telling me to hold back, Shun?”

Yes! He could kiss her right then for providing him with such a brilliant excuse.

“Ah, yes! I wanted to ask you to hold back.”

“Don't worry, Shun. I was also thinking about that. From what I can see, Nadeshiko seems to be about a level 10 martial artist. I don't want to injure her further.”

“I-I see...”

In this dimension, Shun didn't think Rosalie would even be able to find an equal. He really didn't know whether to laugh or cry at that.

“I'll definitely win.”

Rosalie was nothing if not confident.

“I am a warrior. Warriors never lose.”

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 7

Episode 7:

Cheers erupted from the other end of the grounds.

Nadeshiko's palanquin made its grand appearance. It was a marvellous concoction, nearly taking away the breath of every last boy watching.

Strong, meaty men wearing yellow safety vests gave a uniform half turn before throwing themselves down onto the mat before her.

Nadeshiko got up and daintily stepped into the ring.

Why that little – Here were the heads of various famous martial arts schools, prostrating themselves before her, whereas she herself stood in all her grandeur, barely breaking a sweat.

Shun had never met someone as conceited in his life.

Still, he could not deny that she'd done a good job with... this.

Considering that she only had about one an hour to put all of this together, with the ring as the centre, and seats expanding outwards in the shape of a colosseum, she really outdid herself.

The whole thing looked extremely professional, with the Newspaper Club chipping in to hand out pamphlets about the anticipated rematch.

Clearing her throat, Nadeshiko got ready to make her announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your patience – well, not really, considering that I only took an hour to get ready, but no big deal!"

She threw a sidelong glance at Shun and Rosalie, before continuing.

"I thought I'd just have a little bit of fun before we began, you know, just for some warm ups. I'm sure by now, all of you have received the notification that I sent out earlier, saying that if this girl –"

Cue glance at Rosalie.

"–If this girl here beats me, she can marry whomsoever she wishes to. This will serve to make the match more interesting, as I think you can all testify to, by your overwhelming number in attendance. I am such a genius to have thought of and arranged all this, am I not? Which hot blooded male here would not like to have my hand in marriage? Am I right, students, or am I right?"

Covering her mouth with the back of her hand, she threw back her head in wild fits of laughter.

Climbing onto the ring, Nadeshiko's followers, known as the Red Star Lily Squad by the other students, grabbed the prostrated men and heaped them onto the stretchers. Then, they proceeded to carry them out of the ring.

Man, those girls sure were strong. Well, no surprise there though, seeing as they all belonged to Nadeshiko's own martial arts club, who lived by the rule – the Stars above are inexorably linked to my body.

"Well then Shun, I'll be going now."

With a parting look at Shun, Rosalie stepped into the ring amidst claps, cheers and catcalls.

The crowd sure was heating up fast. Things were rather different today compared to how they'd usually be, and the fact that lessons were cancelled for this already made the students happy beyond belief. To them, this was a lucky break, and an interesting one at that.

Shaking his head, Shun made his way to the second seat and plunked his butt down.

Coming up next to him, Sora sat down on his right.

"Let's hope that this fight will not bring about a showy conclusion."

"I've already told her to lay off the magic."

"Thank you. We wouldn't want her to notice anything strange should everyone start talking if she uses her magic."

"Got it."

Strangely, Sora was still wearing her cat ears when she was discussing about this issue with Shun.

Hmm... Seems like she broke her own little rule here.

Uehara approached Shun next, and sat down on his left.

"Hey, there's something I'd like to ask you about later."

"Huh...?"

"It's about that girl, the Rosalie cosplayer."

Looking up upon the ring, it seemed that Uehara suspected something.

—

A stern looking referee (one of the Red Star Lily Squad members) stood between Rosalie and Nadeshiko.

This was a fight to the death, literally. Lethal moves were allowed and there was no time limit. The referee seemed to only be there to count the knockouts and forfeits.

Well, it'd be alright as long as Rosalie finished this up with a quick, one-hit KO. Shun took a deep breath as Nadeshiko walked towards her red corner.

Rosalie, not having known the rules of a match as such, had to be led to the green corner by the referee.

A gong sounded.

"Frenzy of the Seven Sisters!"

Nadeshiko was the first to launch her attack, lunging forward on one foot while attempting to knee Rosalie in the

face.

Even black belt masters would find it hard to block a kick like that. It was sudden, and fast –

Rosalie stepped towards one side, neatly dodging her attack.

What a quickstep indeed. The audience could barely breathe as they trained their eyes on the two fighters.

Nadeshiko's eyes widened in shock. That must have been a first. Still though, her pride was at stake. Time for the next attack.

Changing her balance in midair, Nadeshiko swung her left leg backwards in the fashion of a roundhouse kick.

Again, Rosalie dodged it.

Turning to face Rosalie, Nadeshiko continued to attack aggressively with her kicks.

Rosalie blocked them all.

At this point, Nadeshiko had somehow gotten closer to Rosalie. Grinning triumphantly, she grabbed Rosalie's head in deadlock and lifted her left leg to knee her.

Rosalie simply reacted by grabbing hold of Rosalie's other foot, and swiftly pulling her forward.

That force sent Nadeshiko flying.

Crashing none too gently into the ropes on the other end, Nadeshiko managed to regain some of her balance, and at the last second, did a backflip and bounded back to the other side of the ring. Executing a double summersault in midair, Nadeshiko landed on her knees. Right in front of Rosalie.

The crowd went wild.

—

Nadeshiko's face was livid.

She couldn't believe it. Any other opponent she had faced had gone down in three moves. They had never been able to withstand her, had never been able to win her.

And now, here was someone she couldn't win. The difference in skill level between them was so overwhelming in fact, that Nadeshiko herself could barely catch up.

It was impossible, and yet –

"Who are you?"

"I am a warrior."

—

"I am a warrior."

Rosalie's answer came out strong and unwavering, to the cheers of the crowd below. Shun could still see the both of them talking on the ring above, but even from where he was, the noise of the crowd was loud enough to drown out their conversation.

“A warrior...?”

“Yes.”

Nadeshiko, who had not a whit of interest in games, fortunately, did not react adversely to her answer.

“And what does this warrior thing of yours, have to do with Kanda Shun?”

“...Are you talking about Shun here?”

“Well, do we know of any other person called Shun?”

“I am Shun’s bride. We have yet to wed, but I know for sure that one day, we will.”

Rosalie lifted her arms to block against Nadeshiko’s high kick.

“...It couldn’t be that you actually like that unattractive, talentless freak, could it?”

“Shun and I, we are joined by fate.”

Rosalie could really be quite assertive when she wanted to.

“He was always with me, has always been by my side.”

A hint of pride coloured her voice. She was so happy.

“What rubbish!”

In a flash, Nadeshiko crouched down, her actions seeming to have increased in speed.

That took Rosalie off guard. She was a split second slower to react.

“Solid Saturn!”

This time, Nadeshiko managed to push Rosalie face down onto the mat as she crouched down behind her, holding her hands tight.

Rosalie immediately tried to get up, but somehow she couldn’t move.

Nadeshiko had her hand pressed onto the back of Rosalie’s neck, holding her in a vulnerable position, while the other hand kept a lockdown on her wrist.

Rosalie was effectively caught in a deadlock.

“There has to be a limit to how much you can handle!”

As if trying to test Rosalie’s limits, Nadeshiko pushed down harder onto the vital point behind her neck.

Shit was about to get serious.

Rosalie put in even more strength as she struggled to escape.

One tug, and Nadeshiko was sent flying.

”What brute strength!”

Nadeshiko was forced to admit so. Her previous attack though had not gone to waste. Her smug smile seemed to

show that she finally understood something about Rosalie.

On the other side of the ring, Rosalie looked confused.

“How can it be? Nadeshiko isn’t just at level 10?”

This was probably the first time that her guess had been off.

“I still have to beat her though.”

Shrugging her shoulders, Rosalie got her head back into the game.

Squaring off with Nadeshiko, Rosalie gave an almighty kick to the floor of the ring as the force propelled her towards Nadeshiko. Stretching out her hand, Rosalie appeared ready to hit Nadeshiko with the flat of her hand when –

“The isolated comet!”

Crack.

The moment Rosalie’s hand came into contact with Nadeshiko, a twist of her wrist had Rosalie falling hard behind her.

More cheers erupted.

Even Shun, who knew next to nothing about martial arts, could somehow guess that Nadeshiko had just employed an Aikido move, which turned the opponent’s strength against themselves.

Standing up, Rosalie seemed even more stunned.

“...W-What was that? How is it that you would know how –?”

Her reaction was akin to that of what normal people would react should they see someone perform magic right in front of their eyes.

She really couldn’t believe it.

Lunging at Nadeshiko again, she decided to test it out one more time.

Nadeshiko could just barely react to this one, as she threw Rosalie down onto the steps of the ring.

“Just as I thought!”

Nadeshiko was breathing hard, but she couldn’t resist the urge to gloat at the fallen Rosalie.

“You have no conception whatsoever of martial arts! Your movements are that of an amateur – nay, you’re actually worse than an amateur. You’re a complete beginner at this.”

Upon hearing this, something clicked in Shun’s mind.

It was no wonder that Rosalie couldn’t react to Nadeshiko’s attacks. In the world of Dragon Bless, martial arts did not even exist. To Rosalie, this stuff was all brand new, just like eating.

The art of fighting, which had been passed down from generation to generation in the human world, was utterly foreign to Rosalie. Shun could imagine her terror when faced with an enemy who excelled in something that she didn’t even know about.

That had to be why she couldn't attack.

"What is this? I-It's not magic, but –"

Nadeshiko's grating laughter sounded aloud.

"The real fight starts now! From here on out, stand in awe of my gorgeous –"

"I cannot lose here."

Rosalie was glowing, literally. Her sword had found a way into her hand as bright beautiful lights played on her face. This was the secret move of the warrior princess Rosalie, the divine sword "Kraus Soras".

"Rosalie!"

Staring straight ahead, Rosalie gave no indication that she heard Shun calling her.

"Until the day comes where I defeat the demon king, Gúrgor Vāha, and finally obtain world peace, I cannot be defeated in battle."

Shit, she was getting confused.

Here and there, Shun could hear the students whispering furiously amongst themselves.

It might have been broad daylight, but the light emanating from Rosalie still shone as brightly as a fallen star.

"Is this some sort of trick?"

No, what you guys are witnessing is undoubtedly a real miracle.

"No way man, that can't be –"

There's no hiding it now.

Shun buried his face into his hands.

"Are we actually looking at the real thing here?"

"Hey, hey, this looks kind of dangerous!"

"We'd better get going!"

And with that, one after another, the students stood up and ran off, finding an open space in the ground that seemed safe from the impending attack.

"Hey, Kanda."

Uehara caught hold of Shun, and uttered in barely a whisper,

"I'm going to ask you something really stupid now, okay?"

On his other side, Sora gave an audible sigh.

"I really hate you, Kanda-san."

Taking off her cat ears, she launched into action.

—

Her phone was her weapon of choice this time as she tapped furiously on the buttons.

Could she really be texting at this point of time?

“Well, since I’m going to have to write a letter of apology for this anyway, I might as well actually act like the intergalactic agent I am.”

And then, she hit ‘send’.

Shun followed her gaze.

What in the world did she do? It was just a phone and

—

No way!

Clusters of shining signs shone brightly in the sky. Huge, word-like signs.

Miraculously, only Shun and Sora seemed able to see it.

The signs shone spotlights of rectangles onto the ground, as it gradually lit up from left to right.

Shun watched as they grew brighter, before finally disappearing.

And then —

“Ah, there’s no need to ask you after all!”

Uehara gave a disbelieving little snort of laughter.

“You know, things like ‘Rosalie having jumped out of the game into real life’, they’re really just too impossible, huh? Did you rig this stuff up, Kanda? If so, you’re seriously amazing!”

Huh?

But Uehara wasn’t the only one.

“Hah! This has to be a trick!”

“Yeah, I mean, if you think about it logically.”

“Someone, ask that foreign kid about this later, you get me? And that Kanda guy too!”

The whole atmosphere had changed. All the students, who had been panicking just a while back, were now acting all cynical and unamused.

“That’s the best that I can do.”



Pocketing her phone, Sora turned to face Shun.

"I've done my part. The rest is up to you."

"What do you mean, 'the rest'?"

Sora gestured towards the stage.

Rosalie had finished charging, as she held out her sword, Kraus Soras's signature 'hand of silver' blatantly screaming out its presence.

"Kraus Soras" was an extremely high-level attack that would cause 1000 points damage to the enemy, regardless of the circumstances. Just a few days ago, fighter jets were smashed to bits when the attack hit them. Shun really didn't want to find out what would happen should the same attack hit Nadeshiko.

"Rosalie! Rosalie!"

Amidst the confusion, his voice didn't reach her.

Shun stood up, resolutely heading towards the steps up to the ring.

"Stop that idiot!"

Nadeshiko barked out an order to the Red Star Lily squad.

"I-I will win!"

The words came out strong and confident, but if Shun tried, he could hear a slight tremor in her voice that hadn't been there before.

The light was so strong now that it nearly blinded Shun. The pressure was overwhelming, more than it had ever been in-game.

Surely, Nadeshiko could feel it too.

He wondered if she had enough guts to back out and run or if –

"I will not lose to some mere girl like you! You, who is just a – "

Great. Of all things, she had to have enough pride to stand her ground.

Why?!

"Start running! What are you still doing standing there? Rosalie! Can you hear me, Rosalie?!"

Effectively trapped by the Red Star Lily squad, Shun looked around, hoping to find something of help.

The other students, who had now been brainwashed, were sitting there, chatting nonchalantly about the match. Sora had mysteriously disappeared, and there seemed to be no one else –

Found it!

Shun's eyes alighted on that little something at the corner of the stadium.

Flinging his captors off, shouting his assurance that he would not step up on the ring, Shun made a dash for the thing.

Meanwhile, Rosalie had entered the activation stance.

Nadeshiko, ever the reckless challenger, also looked prepared to execute her next move.

I hope this works.

Picking it up, Shun gave an almighty swing –

–

“Kraus Sora –“

Flump.

Tome the fluffy dog landed on Rosalie’s head, it’s round tummy blocking her line of sight.

Rosalie, who was literally one syllable away from launching her attack, started to tremble all over.

And then, the nose bleed came.

There was so much blood, that Tome, painted red, looked like a failed attempt at hara-kiri.

As if the first time wasn’t bad enough.

Letting rip a howl of horror, Tome jumped and shot off like a bullet into the great unknown of the school grounds.

Silver light having been successfully replaced with crimson blood, Rosalie gave chase. The match could go off itself.

And Nadeshiko?

As soon as Rosalie was out of sight, she crumbled and fell.

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VOLUME 1

Season 2, Episode 8

Episode 8:

Just a year ago, she'd never ever ridden a bicycle before.

It was just one of those parties that celebrated the start of yet another financial year, and somehow, she found herself talking to the president of a bicycle manufacturing company.

They talked all night, with topics spanning from politics to the current situation of toilets in Japan, and amidst all this, Nadeshiko was hit with a realization.

She'd never ridden a bike before. Ever.

Like, she'd been on cars before, that was her usual mode of transport, and sometimes she'd walk for her training. She'd taken the aeroplane and the boat, and once upon a time even sat on the bullet train. Then of course, there were the cruises and luxury trains when she travelled abroad.

But despite being able to list out an impressive amount of vehicles, Nadeshiko could not truthfully say she'd sat on a bicycle before.

This was intriguing indeed. She had to try it.

Ordering her servant to purchase a bike for her, Nadeshiko hastened to try it out. She had heard that it took quite a while to master the skill of balancing on a bike. But of course, being the genius that she was, it took her all of two tries to get to grips with the whole thing.

Since then, she'd take her bike out with her on her morning jaunts, past the area where she normally jogged, into commoner's territory.

It was refreshing to see herself being able to peddle a vehicle and move it along her desired path.

And then –

The idiot commoner's idiot car just flew out of a bend so idiotically that it was hardly her fault that she fell down in fright.

Her reflexes, brilliant as ever, propelled her quickly to her feet, but even as she made to chase after the car, her plan got caught in a snag. Her bike had been broken. No matter how furiously she peddled, her bike wouldn't move.

It was like cycling on air.

Around her, she could see commoners staring at her.

It was so embarrassing that she felt her head start to spin.

No, it wasn't possible. How was it that this had befallen her, the great Nadeshiko? And in front of unworthy commoners, no less.

It was all that bicycle's fault. Stupid, stupid –

“Hi there, would you like me to fix this for you?”

A voice, out of nowhere, broke through the haze.

Squatting down in front of the bicycle, the boy proceeded to give it a thorough check.

“As I suspected, the chain's gone loose.”

Following his finger, Nadeshiko could make out some sort of metal chain that seemed to dangle from her bike.

Hmm.

Grabbing the pedal, he started to turn it.

“And just a little bit here...”

A loud crack, and the chain seemed a lot less loose around the edges now.

He took the pedals out for a test drive, moving them in circles, watching as they emitted a creaking noise indicative of gear contact while the bike's wheels turned in tandem with the pedals.

It was amazing.

For the first time in her life, Nadeshiko had nothing to say. It was as though she had forgotten how to speak.

To her, his handiwork seemed almost god-like in its glory, simple though it was. He had saved her. And that in itself was worthy of praise.

He smiled, seemingly satisfied with his work.

In that moment, he was the coolest guy on earth.

She'd have stopped him, just to thank him of course, but he clearly had no time for her. Brushing off the dust, he got up and headed off on his own merry way with a quick goodbye.

“Damn, I'm late!”

He was muttering as he swept past her.

And then, things went back to normal.

Nadeshiko rode home and kept up her bicycle. Following this incident, she somehow just happened to search for him, somehow just happened to locate the high school that he was going to next spring, somehow just happened to change her own plans for high school, and just somehow happened to bump into him on the day of the entrance exam.

“Oh, what a surprise!”

“... Sorry?”

He had forgotten all about her.

—

Carrying Nadeshiko on piggy back, Shun headed towards the nurse's office in the Celebrity Course building.

Surrounding him were the Red Star Lily Squad, all of them equal parts worried about Nadeshiko and equal parts wary of him.

It was his first time in the Celebrity Course building. The walls, the rooms, the tables, heck even the toilets, they were, for lack of a better word, breath taking.

Shun felt like a tourist in Europe – new, foreign and utterly overwhelmed.

“...Ugh...”

The weight on his back shifted. Nadeshiko started to stir.

“Nadeshiko-sama!”

The Red Star Lily Squad were on their toes immediately.

Turning around, Shun was greeted with Nadeshiko's rather blank stare. Her eyes were unfocused, looking as though she had just taken a jog down memory lane in her dreams.

“Are you alright?”

...

His voice by her ear seemed to jolt her awake.

Pushing hard against him, Nadeshiko screamed.

“Y-You insolent –”

Shun dropped Nadeshiko to the floor.

Her cheeks were stained red, as though she had run a marathon or something.

“W-Why are you carrying me?”

“Hey, don't look at me! You were the one who refused to let go.”

“W-What are you saying? You rascal!”

Shun couldn't have felt more wronged.

“After the match with Rosalie, you fainted, remember? Then, when I went up on stage to try to chase after her, you grabbed hold of me so hard, I couldn't get away. Even those girls had a go at prying off your fingers, but nothing worked, okay? You were just –”

“S-Stop it!”

Nadeshiko had shut him out.

All further explanations were pointless.

Her whole body seemed flush.

Was she really that angry?

"I just lost control for a while back then. This has absolutely nothing to do with my will, or my wants in any way, do you understand?"

"...Nadeshiko-sama."

The Red Star Lily Squad were wearing similar expressions of worry and had started to surround the fallen Nadeshiko.

"It's best if you rest a little... The nurse's office is just around the corner."

"Y-Yes, I suppose so."

Nadeshiko looked relieved as she picked herself up and let her loyal followers lead the way.

A few seconds later though, she turned around once more and addressed Shun.

"T-Thank you, I guess. Well then, have a nice day."

She then picked up the pace and rushed towards the nurse's office.

Sigh.

He never really understood Nadeshiko the tyrant. He doubted that he ever would.

—

The sun was starting to set by the time Shun made his way out of the Celebrity Course building.

"Shun."

Turning around, Shun spotted Rosalie standing by the statue.

"Why are you here?"

"Because I saw Shun heading in just now."

Tome seemed to have escaped.

Rosalie's features on the other hand, were much less fortunate. Caked in blood from the previous nose bleed, she looked akin to those ghastly faces that one saw in the dead of night.

Tugging her hand, Shun dragged Rosalie to the nearby fountain.

"What is it, Shun?"

"Your face."

Grabbing a tissue from his pocket, Shun proceeded to wet it and wipe down her face.

On her part, Rosalie screwed her eyes shut so as to make Shun's job that much easier.

Shun gave a wry smile.

If someone had told him just a day ago that he'd get to witness the heroine princess of the popular RPG game Dragon Bless wearing such an expression, he'd have asked them to get their brains checked out.

The stream of water pouring out of the white statue served to reflect the light of the setting sun, showering the two teenagers in a prism of incandescent light. A light mist was beginning to descend, chasing away the afternoon heat and bringing some peace to those enveloped in its midst.

“Thank you, Shun.”

“Welcome.”

“Shun.”

“Yes?”

“Thank you for eating the bento.”

A pause. His hand frozen on her face.

“I was really happy.”

Her next smile could really have sent a thousand ships to war.

“When I saw you eating the bento that I had made, my heart was so full of happiness I could have burst out in song.”

Small, tiny little rainbows of light had formed, courtesy of the mist and setting sun.

There really weren't that many people in the world, Shun thought, that could be so happy just from the simple act of giving.

In the face of her honest revelation, Shun felt his cheeks suffuse with heat.

What in the world was he to do with this girl?

She turned his plans upside down and upset his entire life altogether. Trouble tended to stick to her like the pandemic, but somehow, through it all, he felt glad.

Glad that he was able to endure all this, glad that he had endured all this, if only to be able to see her this happy.

“Shun is very strong. Stronger even than cream puffs.”

Rosalie was not making much sense, but the way she uttered the words was as if she were divulging a sweet and beautiful little secret.

“Shun, you are my husband.”

“Rosalie, I...”

His heart was beating so hard, he was surprised no one heard it.

The grounds had become so silent, it was as though they had walked into an air pocket all of a sudden.

There was no one else around.

No better time than now to –

Rustle.

Strange, that almost sounded like –

Tome peeped out from the bush in front of him, looking tired within an inch of its life.

“Ah!”

Shun finally found his voice.

Rosalie turned around, wanting a better look for herself.

And then, she spotted it.

—

It wasn't long after that the fountain was dyed red.

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